

Understanding the Authentic Dining Experience: Building Authenticity through Multi-Modal Methods

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<p>This study investigates the term authenticity and how it is used when applied to restaurants. In this thesis I explore the process of determining a restaurant's authenticity and the numerous factors involved in defining whether or not a restaurant may be deemed authentic. Along with considering whether a restaurant can develop their authenticity using none-taste related elements, as well as what are the customer's expectations for an authentic restaurant.</p> <p>The study observes the various interior modes (audible, visual and textual) of a selected restaurant from a major metropolitan area in the United States, as well as interviews with members of the restaurant's staff. In order to offer the perspective of the customer and their understanding of authenticity reviews from the restaurant's page on a popular travel website were collected and are discussed. Using a theoretical framework rooted in the concepts of multiculturalism, orientalism and place I explore the relationship of "us and them", a common narrative in gastronomic discourse, and then discuss the concepts of ethnic food and authenticity.</p> <p>The selected restaurant weaves together different modes, identified in three separate modal categories, to create the overall visual look and feel of their restaurant. Often these modes result in the restaurant self-orientalizing or displaying general otherness in order to create a transportative experience for their diners. This study identifies that authenticity as a concept is multifaceted and its meaning is determined by both who is using the term and for what purpose they are identifying a restaurant as authentic.</p>			
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1 Introduction

As a child of South Asian immigrants, I grew up watching my parents struggle to balance preserving a connection to the country they left and navigating life in their new home, the American Midwest. They believed food as is common for most immigrant families was the strongest connection they had to their homeland, in this case the Indian subcontinent. As Ghassan Hage argues, via Émile Benveniste's understanding of both the linguistic and conceptual debate of house versus home, food is a core component of "the building of the feeling of being at home"¹. Food and the feeling of home for us existed in the kitchen and in the South Asian supermarkets and restaurants we would visit every week. For my parents these weekly trips represented a way to remember the past but also share a connection to their homeland, through food, with me.

In discussing the South Indian community in the San Francisco Bay Area, Mankekar offers the idea that immigrant customers at "ethnic"² markets do not only shop for a taste of home, "but also to engage with representation of their (sometimes imagined) homeland"³. Food reminds us of home but also constructs different ideas of what home is and was. When examining the immigrant experience and the relationship of food and culinary nostalgia Ketu Katrak argues that, "immigrants often invent an image of the homeland as an unchanging and enduring cultural essence and are often singular about the ontological coherency of their national cuisines, despite the fact that memories are fragmentary, partial, and 'irretrievably lost'⁴". While navigating the experiences and struggles of life in their new and unfamiliar communities; immigrants cling to unchanging

¹ Hage 1997, 101

² *The Journal of Ethnic Foods* uses the loose definition of "foods originating from a heritage and culture of an ethnic group who use their knowledge of local ingredients of plants and/or animal source...in a broader sense, ethnic can be defined as an ethnic group's or a country's cuisine that is cultural and socially accepted by consumer out of the respective ethnic group" to define ethnic foods (Kwon 2015, 1)". This concept will be discussed in detail in a later chapter.

³ Holtzman 2006, 367

⁴ Mannur 2007, 14

memories, nostalgia, of their homeland. However, they themselves are often reluctant to view their homelands as changing. We can debate whether this example of culinary nostalgia is truly representative of an individual's homeland or just representative of imagined ideas of home. But food still remains one of the most common manners in which immigrant families gather, remember or imagine their motherland, as well as share these ideas and understandings of home with those around them. Food, the consuming, making and purchasing, is the “nexus of nostalgia and diaspora identity⁴”.

1.1 Introduction to authenticity and the immigrant restaurant

I offer this brief discussion of my childhood and my relationship with culinary nostalgia, the immigrant culinary experience, food and memory as a precursor to my own considerations of different understandings of authenticity and how authenticity functions. To show when we discuss food, gastronomy, cuisine, cookery, epicureanism, etc. we are always talking about more than taste, flavors and ingredients. While Katrak, Mankekar, and Hage are not specifically discussing authenticity and the immigrant culinary experience, one could draw connections between the culinary nostalgia of immigrants and the desire for authentic experiences. Appadurai defines authenticity as “the way something ought to be⁵”. Katrak and Mankekar both relate culinary nostalgia and the immigrant culinary experience to remembered or imagined ideas of taste, a taste of what home was or what home “ought to be”.

Authenticity itself is complex and is intertwined with different elements such as nostalgia, memory, and place. Each of which can determine one's understanding of authenticity. That is to say whether culinary nostalgia or culinary desires are formed from one's experiences, memories or through exposure to different aspects of culinary culture, e.g. food-based media or social-media platforms like Facebook or Instagram, it often contains some element of an imagined culinary experience. When we consider food and

⁴ Holtzman 2006, 366

⁵ Buettner 2008, 883

authenticity, we often incorporate our own experiences into the authenticating process or use them to either endorse or discredit other authenticators.

As Katrak chronicles, much of the immigrant culinary experience deals with navigating and adjusting their own culinary practices to those within their new country of residence⁶. Whether it be replacing ingredients that are no longer readily available or facing pressure from their new communities to adjust the smells and tastes of their cuisines. Mintz argues that, “new immigrants to the United States have been pressured to give up their cultural traditions-including their way of eating-in the name of ‘American-ization’⁷”. This process of navigation and adjustment exists not just within the immigrant home but for immigrant restaurateurs as well. As seen in the experiences of South Asian⁸ restaurateurs in the United Kingdom, as observed by Buettner, who saw their curries transform from being too pungent and too spice-laden to become inexpensive post-pub fare for college students. This fear of unknown flavors forced South Asian restaurateurs to tailor their cuisine to the British palate. Li Li chronicles similar experiences of Chinese culinary entrepreneurs in the American Mountain West, a region with very limited Chinese immigration, who found that they needed to both adapt their own dishes along with integrating local flavors and ingredients, in order to run successful businesses⁹. Buettner offers specific examples of the relationship of immigrant food and the culinary adaptation process, whether we call it acceptance, integration or transformation, within both the United States and Western Europe,

“Italian food, Chinese, and Mexican food became American; Italian food and Döner kebabs introduced by Turkish “guest workers” entered German diets; North African couscous became common in France; Indonesian and Chinese food gained acceptances in the Netherlands; and chicken tikka masala became British¹⁰ ”.

⁶ Mannur 2007, 13

⁷ Russek 2011, 37

⁸ The term South Asian here is used as a stand in for the Indian Sub-continent. While a majority of restaurants discussed in Buettner’s study are identified as Indian restaurants, a majority of the restaurateurs and employees are from other countries that make up this geographic region, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Buettner 2008, 869).

⁹ Li 2002, 329-346.

¹⁰ Buettner 2008, 881

While immigrant restaurateurs are often forced to tailor their cooking to fit local diets, as the author states above their cuisines, flavors and ingredients eventually enter the local culinary lexicon. For example, even today we can see multinational fast food and fast casual restaurants embrace different aspects of cuisines that had previously been rejected based on taste or smell; see *chipotle ketchup*, *curry mayonnaise* or the plethora of so-called ethnic ready meals available in every supermarket. Turgeon and Pastinelli point to fast food giant McDonalds introducing ethnic-fare, pizza and tacos, in the 1980s and General Foods selling frozen burritos in supermarkets as the beginning of this phase of the immigrant food experience¹¹. While the term ethnic food may predate the arrival of this trend, it has become synonymous with the food of the other¹².

As immigrant food or the food of the other has been amalgamated into new gastronomic environments, culinary outsiders or gastronomic outsiders¹³, have begun to tire of adapted ethnic cuisines, or as Mintz calls it “Americanized¹⁴” food and have now developed a taste for the real thing, the authentic. Belasco argues that this movement is centered on a youthful rebellion against the “hegemonic values of the culture incarnated by American food¹⁵”, however I would contend that this manner of thinking completely removes the immigrant cooks’ and restaurateurs’ experience from the equation and only further cements the idea that the taste for the other is only desired when it is convenient for

¹¹ Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002, 256

¹² “*Otherness* is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group (“US,” the self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups (“The,” Other) by stigmatizing a difference – real or imagined – presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination (Staszak J. 2009, 2)”. In the culinary relationship discussed the other are immigrants whose difference, whether it be ethnic, linguistic, racial, etc., is the cause of the discrimination they face

¹³ “Food choices establish boundaries and borders. Food identifies who we are, as individuals and as nations, and our tastes are as telling as our distastes (Henderson 2011, 148)”. Culinary outsiders being those who fall outside of the established boundaries and insiders being those who fall within the boundaries. Lisa Heldke, using herself as an example, states, “For example I am not Thai, or Thai-American, but I am German-American. My nonmembership and membership in those groups is uncontested and, for the time being is at least, pretty uncontested. When I read a Thai cookbook, I unquestionably read it as an outsider (Heldke 2003, 105)”.

¹⁴ Also Westernized

¹⁵ Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002, 257

the dominant culture¹⁶. While I agree that some culinary outsiders may be rebelling against the American or Western culinary hegemony and the resulting versions of ethnic food that it demands by removing the other's experience from the situation, we only further cement the power of a dominant culture to juristic what flavors and tastes are considered to be palatable. As will be discussed later within this study, we need to further consider what culinary integration actually means and who controls how and when it occurs.

While immigrant restaurateurs have spent years adapting their cooking to fit the American palate or as Buettner details the British palate, a portion of the general eating public have developed a taste for the 'real thing', or the authentic version of various cuisines. These adventurous culinary outsiders now converse with their immigrant friends or second-generation friends about where they liked to eat or how their families prepare specific dishes. While other gastronomic outsiders can simply rely on the burgeoning food media scene including television networks, *The Food Network*, *The Cooking Channel*, and internet-based food media like the publication *Eater* or the website *Munchies*. In some cases, they can refer to former culinary outsiders like Rich Bayless, author of *Authentic Mexican: Regional Cooking From the Heat of Mexico*¹⁷, or Fuchsia Dunlop, author of *Land of Plenty: A Treasury of Authentic Sichuan Cooking*¹⁸, who through years of studying and cooking specific regional cuisines or national cuisines have transitioned to now being regarded as culinary insiders or as Heldke identifies these individuals, insider-outsiders¹⁹. The food of the other has now transformed from ugly to *Ugly Delicious*²⁰. Culinary outsiders often travel in search of these authentic dishes and restaurants to expand their own views on taste, flavor and cuisine. Knowledge about different neighborhoods and their

¹⁶ "Whereas traditional societies can be characterized by a high consistency of cultural traits and customs, modern societies are often a conglomeration of different, often competing, cultures and subcultures. In such a situation of diversity, a dominant culture is one whose values, language and ways of behaving are imposed on a subordinate culture or cultures through economic or political power. This may be achieved through legal or political suppression of other sets of values and patterns of behavior, or by monopolizing the media of communication (Scott 2014)".

¹⁷ Bayless 2007

¹⁸ Dunlop 2003

¹⁹ Heldke 2003, 110

²⁰ Netflix Television Program

local delicacies has become a form cultural capital²¹ for the informed eater, the foodie or food adventurer. Gastronomic outsiders now freely enter ethnic economies²² that had formally only been frequented by members of the same ethnic communities. Online and print food publications like the now defunct *Lucky Peach* often publish article exposing their readers to exciting new locations within these ethnic economies, that for gastronomic outsiders appear out nowhere. A key aspect of this process is the element of discovery; uncovering something “new” despite the fact that it may have been there all along.

For culinary outsiders these newly discovered restaurants prove to not just dazzle their palates but are frequently priced much lower than the ‘non-ethnic’ fair. Fanelli and Di Nocerca state in the United States, the Netherlands, Italy and France that ethnic restaurants are often characterized by their “*moderate prices*²³”. As this excerpt from Tyler Cowen’s 2012 piece in *The Atlantic* entitled *Six Rules for Dining Out: How a frugal economist finds the perfect lunch* illustrates:

“When it comes to a restaurant run by immigrants, look around at the street scene. Do you see something ugly? Poor construction? Broken plastic signage? A five-and-dime store? Maybe an abandoned car? If so, crack a quiet smile, walk through the door, and order. Welcome to the glamorous world of good food²⁴”.

According to Cowen immigrant food is delicious and affordable but also requires an element of effort by the eater. As the author illustrates the eater must search-out restaurants in locations that do not fit the culinary outsiders stereotypical ‘stomping-ground’. The whole article shines a light on the way the other’s food, can be view in a larger context. To find “good food” you must be willing to travel off the beaten path to places that may make you uncomfortable or may be dangerous. Eating the food of the other represents not just

²¹ Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of Cultural Capital will be discussed in the *Ethnic Food* chapter.

²² “An ethnic economy could be defined as any situation where common ethnicity provides an economic advantage: in relation among owners in the same of complementary business sectors, between owners and workers, or even among workers in the same firm or industry regardless of the owner’s ethnicity (Logan, Alba and McNulty 1994, 695)”.

²³ Fanelli and Nocera 2018, 167

²⁴ Cowen 2012

eating for sustenance but also an adventure. This provides the eater with so much more than nourishment; they also gain knowledge.

Cowen also outlines that there are specific visual cues for culinary outsiders to be aware of in order to locate good food. The notions of “something ugly” and “poor construction” while vague, leads culinary outsiders to have specific expectations of the location as well as the interior or exterior design elements of these restaurants. The mentioning of a “five-and-dime store” and “an abandoned car” give culinary outsiders an understanding of what kind of place or location they should be searching for to encounter good food. Throughout Cowen’s piece we see how the food of the other benefits members of the dominant culture, while the immigrant experience is never recognized or discussed. Cowen is much more concerned with an economical approach to ingesting quality food than the authenticity of the restaurants or dishes he mentions²⁵. The author’s understanding of ethnic restaurants and their place amongst the culinary hegemony is all too indicative of the immigrant restaurant experience. Food that was once too foreign to consume is now both valuable and beneficial to the dominant culture.

1.2 Research questions and framework

As briefly discussed, the immigrant restaurateurs’ experience can be seen in different stages as dictated by the dominant culture. First beginning with a needed adjustment to local taste, a stage of transformation or integration and then based on both the culinary demands and expectations of the dominant culture a return to cooking authentic versions of their respective cuisines. Authenticity and how a restaurant’s authenticity are determined and constructed is what will be discussed within this thesis. The process of trying to address and explore authenticity was met with several obstacles and barriers. My first attempt to investigate how the term authenticity functions in restaurants in a major metropolitan area located on the West Coast of the United States, the location of the study has been withheld in order to protect the anonymity of those who willingly participated in the study, was to pursue interviews with owners, cooks and employees from various immigrant-run ‘ethnic restaurants’. Although I was granted several interviews there was an overwhelming sense

²⁵ Cowen 2012

of fear from those, I interviewed due to the current political climate within the United States; the staunch anti-immigration agenda of the current United States presidential regime, the resulting further harassment of various groups of marginalized peoples and the drastic increase in deportation of immigrants who had been deemed illegal. I was presented with a situation in which many potential interviewees were not interested in participating in the study or those who did participate in interviews later asked to be removed from the study.

These interviews were conducted during January 2018 and in the following month it was reported by various US-based news outlets that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE, had detained around 150 people from Northern California²⁶. Two months later in an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Justin Phillips detailed an overwhelming sense of fear felt by employees and restaurateurs because of the increased probability of these ICE raids²⁷. As Phillips writes undocumented workers make up a significant portion of the service industry workforce. Citing *Pew Research Center*, Philips states,

“undocumented immigrants account for 11 percent of the country’s restaurant and bar workforce, a percentage that translates to around 1.3 million people. The workers seldom interact with diners since they tend to occupy lower-level positions such as bussers and dishwashers. Undocumented workers make up 17 percent and 19 percent of each category, respectively, according to Pew²⁸”.

As a result, I have chosen to approach understanding authenticity and how a restaurant builds and displays their own authenticity through the utilization of different visuals and audible elements within a selected restaurant, which for the purposes of this study has been identified as *Restaurant A*.

²⁶ CBS News 2018

²⁷ Phillips 2018

²⁸ Philips 2018

Over a one-month period, January 2018, I visited Restaurant A who specialize in serving “*Burmese*²⁹ *delicacies*³⁰”. During my time at Restaurant A I was able to photograph and document various interior design elements of the restaurant including statutes, musical instruments, tapestries, pillows, handicrafts, pottery and plants. As well as have access to their kitchen and menu. Just as Cowen’s guide offers key identifiers for readers to locate good food, I believe we can observe how a restaurant’s authenticity is both constructed visually and audibly, by the restaurant itself and simultaneously how the restaurant’s authenticity is evaluated based on visual and audible elements, as well as location, by the customer. This approach allows me to interpret how Restaurant A is able to appear authentic to culinary outsiders without discussing the authenticity of their food³¹. In addition to the visual and audible data collected from Restaurant A, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three members of the restaurant’s staff. These interviews will be used as means to clarify the intended meaning, origin and significance of each interior element of the restaurant. This will allow me to understand the restaurant’s intentions, as well as offer more information about the items discussed. In order to observe the impact that these design elements and choices, used by Restaurant A, have on the customers’ perception of the Restaurant A’s authenticity, I have collected user-submitted reviews from the restaurant’s page on a popular online travel website³², which for the purposes of this study will called ReviewSite. These reviews serve as means to explore what effect different elements have on the authenticity of the restaurant for the customers.

²⁹ While the nation of Myanmar officially changed the name of their country from Burma to Myanmar in 1989, both of the two names Myanmar and Burma are recognized differently across the globe (Dittmer 2008, 885). In the case of the European Union the country has been referred to as Myanmar/Burma (Dittmer 2008, 885). Terms like Burmese food, Burmese cuisine and Burmese restaurant are used within this study, instead of Myanma food, Myanma cuisine, Myanma restaurant, not as means to engage in the politicized nature of either name. The adjective Burmese, instead of Myanma, has been selected only to use the same terminology as Restaurant A uses to describe itself. Additionally, in the User-submitted online review portion of the data, the term Burmese is used by all users to describe the Restaurant A’s food, while Myanmar is only used once as means to identify the country from which the user ascribed the food they tasted.

³⁰ As described on their website and menu

³¹ My own understanding of authentic food and the existence of authentic food will be discussed in the *Authenticity* chapter of this study.

³² The name of this website has been removed from this study to keep the restaurant and their employees anonymous. Additionally, slight changes in wording have been made to the reviews used to protect the identity of those participating in the study. If needed originals copies of the posts can be provided.

Using multimodal discourse analysis, I will be able to analyze different aspects and elements, modes, of the observed restaurant. Understanding that each mode has an individual meaning but also when combine with other modes has a secondary significance.

After introducing my methodology, multimodal discourse analysis, and presenting the data I collected from Restaurant A, I will discuss the concepts of *multiculturalism*, *orientalism* and *place* in order to establish the base relationship of “us and them”, which creates the desire for authenticity. I will move on to explore the concepts of *ethnic food* and *authenticity*. I cannot discuss authenticity without first introducing the concept of ethnic food, as food that is labeled as ethnic food is often what is identified as authentic. When discussing authenticity, I will approach this concept from an interdisciplinary perspective incorporating a concept from the field of anthropology, Edward Bruner’s four senses of the authentic. By stepping outside of field of food studies and incorporating different understanding of authenticity, I hope to challenge how we understand the concept of authenticity when used with gastronomy and to offer that in fact authenticity is not singular in nature but in fact is a reflection of the individual or organization who is doing the authenticating.

Research Questions:

Can a restaurant develop their authenticity through non-taste related modes, visual and audible?

What are the modes (visual, linguistic, audible) that construct an authentic and ethnic dining experience? How are they constructed internally (restaurants) and how are the constructed by diners (externally)?

Do diners at ethnic restaurants have certain expectations of the restaurant, beyond taste?

2. Methodology

In the spirit of the multi-disciplinary nature of this study, I have chosen to approach analyzing the interior elements of Restaurant A using *Multimodal Discourse Analysis*, MDA. This method allows me to consider the various modes from Restaurant A and analyze how they combine to develop authenticity within the restaurant. It also allows me to consider how each mode individually can relate to different forms of authenticity based on the restaurant's desires, as well as the customers' perceptions. By using MDA to explore the interior of Restaurant A, I can incorporate different understandings of authenticity on an individual basis, for each mode, as well as observe the collective text, Restaurant A. While some modes may contain contrasting viewpoints of authenticity, we can explore how different forms of authenticity can be combined to create an authentic text. This also allows me to consider the intentions of Restaurant A, as well the expectations of the diner.

While Discourse Analysis, DA, attempts to go beyond the word choice and analyze “(features of) the language³³” and their function in “social life” or as van Dijk describes DA the study of language use³⁴, Critical Discourse Analysis can be used to analyze “social phenomena which are necessarily complex and thus require a multi-disciplinary and multi-methodical approach³⁵”. MDA expands upon this idea to include other modes beyond just language but at its core is both multi-methodical and multi-disciplinary. As O'Halloran identifies MDA as using,

“systemic functional (SF) theory³⁶ as framework for conceptualizing the complex array of semiotic resources which are used to create meaning (e.g. language, visual imagery, gesture, sound, music, three dimensional objects and architecture) and detailed practices for analyzing the meaning arising from the integrated use of those resources in communicative artifacts (i.e. texts) and events³⁷”.

³³ Kress 2011, 35

³⁴ van Dijk 1993, 251

³⁵ Meyer and Wodak 2009, 2

³⁶ *Systemic Functional Theory*, as defined by Halliday, is “a social semiotic theory where the meaning is seen to be context dependent (O'Halloran 2008, 445)”.

³⁷ O'Halloran 2013, 37

If we consider the context being a restaurant who wants to attract customers, many of who are identified as culinary-outsiders, we can thus see how different modes selected by said restaurant can be combined to create meaning for the restaurant and for the diner. Each interior element whether it be a painting on a wall, or the lighting of restaurant are selected by the restaurant to create some kind of meaning. Simultaneously if we are to alter the context of Restaurant A then the meaning of each mode changes. If we change the context of Restaurant A, for example if the restaurant transformed into a Hainanese style restaurant, the modes within the restaurant could potentially shift to be more or even less authentic.

In discussing MDA, Gunter Kress presents the analogy of a *weaver* creating *texts*³⁸. Within this relationship we understand that the weaver “has a sense of coherence” when combining the various elements that comprise their text and that we can consider both who the weaver is, as well what formulates their sense of coherence³⁹. For Kress, “the question of who the ‘weaver’ is, and what forms of ‘coherence are shaped by her, him or them, is a significant issue at all times⁴⁰”. If we are to consider Restaurant A to be the weaver in this situation, then their text being the restaurant itself. The text portion of this relationship is “a *multimodal semiotic entity*” comprised of various threads that can range from, but are not limited to, “*gesture, speech, image (still or moving), writing, music*⁴¹”. One example of in which Kress presents the use of MDA is their analysis of signage for a parking lot at a shopping center. Take a second to consider a sign in a parking garage, we can imagine that sign is composed of a mix of words, symbols, colors and images. If we are to examine the signage for the space, Kress encourages us to consider the words used on the sign, the images, the colors, arrangement, the font and layout in interpreting the sign. Each of these modes are woven together to create the text, the parking sign, that we see⁴². While we can understand that each individual thread can have their own meaning, when combined they

³⁸ Kress 2011, 36

³⁹ Kress 2011, 36

⁴⁰ Kress 2011, 36

⁴¹ Kress 2011, 36

⁴² Kress 2011, 39-40

create an overall meaning for the signage. We can both assess each individual mode's meaning, as well as observing the overall meaning of the sign.

When discussing the threads, modes, of Restaurant A I have chosen to place them in separate categories based on their connection to Bruner's four senses of the authentic, orientalism and place. In this case we can consider what expectation the customer has for Restaurant A, based on theories of multiculturalism, place, and orientalism, combined with the weaver use of different texts to address these expectations. Using MDA allows me to incorporate all different aspects of the restaurants interior when discussing meaning.

3. Data

As stated, the process of trying to understand authenticity both in terms of how restaurants are deemed authentic and how they themselves display their own authenticity has been difficult to approach. The restaurants initially selected for this thesis were chosen from reviews and lists in various print and online publication including; *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Mercury News*, *The Seattle Times*, *The Oregonian*, *Portland Tribune*, *East Bay Express*, *SF Weekly*, *Eater*, *Los Angeles Times*. I attempted to conduct semi-structured interview with the staff from five restaurants featured in these publications. However, as discussed, based on the current rampant anti-immigration rhetoric of the current United States presidential administration and increased waves of deportation of immigrants, as well as continued raids of businesses and restaurants by ICE agents across the United States, many employees and restauranteurs felt reluctant to participate. I also have an ethical responsibility to protect those I interviewed from early conceptions of this study. All transcripts and recordings, as well as other photographs of the restaurants visited, from early versions of this project have been disposed of and destroyed.

Eventually I was able to locate Restaurant A who agreed to participate in this study, both in terms of have members of their staff interviewed as well as having their restaurant photographed. This restaurant was selected based on it being identified as an ethnic restaurant on numerous online platforms and by the staff's willingness to participate in the study. Secondly the restaurant was also selected because their location connected directly with aspects Cowen's piece in *The Atlantic*. *Place*⁴³ is often a significant element in the culinary outsiders' process of determining the restaurant's possible authenticity. An additional factor in selecting Restaurant A was the user-submitted reviews featured on the restaurant's ReviewSite page. Multiple posts from various user-submitted review sites describe the restaurants location as being a "hole-in-the-wall" or having a "random location" in a "strip mall". Reviewers also discuss their surprise in their dining experience as compared to the look of the exterior of the restaurant as User 15 asserts "you would never have thought it could be like this inside".

⁴³ The concept of *place* will be discussed in the next chapter.

I was allowed to photograph the various dining rooms of Restaurant A, as well as the kitchen and obtain a copy of the menu as a part of my research. In addition to the visual elements I had access to a compact-disc that is played during service at the restaurant called *Pleasing Melody 2* by Hlaing Win Maung (Magway), who plays the Saung⁴⁴. While the restaurant identifies themselves as a Burmese restaurant, it was not selected based the specific cuisine they serve. The significance of the kind of cuisine served at restaurant is not important, as I am exploring that the manner in which authenticity can be constructed through visual and audible modes. This method of observation could be applied to any dining establishment brandished with the label of serving ‘ethnic food’⁴⁵.

In addition to documenting the interior design aspects of the restaurant, I also conducted semi-structured interviews over the course of three visits to Restaurant A. The method of semi-structured interview was chosen to allow participants to describe the restaurant in their own words and allow opportunities for clarification and greater explanation for various interior elements. The interview questions and design were based on *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Application* by Anne Galletta⁴⁶. To remain ethical the names of the three interviewees have been changed to Manager, Cook, and Server. Both the Manager and the Server were born in the United States, while the Cook was born in Myanmar and emigrated to the United States. It is critical to note that the Manager is part of the family who own Restaurant A and had a role in selecting some of the design elements in the restaurant. Brief excerpts from the semi-structured interviews with the three members of the restaurants staff have also been included within this study as means to add context to the images selected, without their input about different design and décor elements I would not be able to identify the items origins or meaning.

In the case of all three interviews, every interviewee identified Restaurant A as “*an ethnic restaurant*” but none of them identified it as “*an authentic restaurant*”. Most of their ideas of authenticity centered around ingredients, as the Server states, “*The tea-leaf salad*

⁴⁴ Harp like instrument

⁴⁵ The relational nature of the term ethnic food will be discussed in the *Ethnic food* chapter.

⁴⁶ Galletta 2013

cannot be authentic because we use cabbage and that is not something they would do in Burma, we are not an authentic Burmese Restaurant because can get all the stuff here [Here the Server is referring to the availability of ingredients]”. The Cook offered that the feeling of the restaurant has been modified to fit local tastes and is thus “*not authentic*” because it does not resemble restaurants in their homeland. While the Manager stated that, “*they were not focused on creating an authentic restaurant*”.

As MDA allows us to consider how different modes can be combined to create meaning, I have chosen to use three separate categories for the modes of Restaurant A. When combined all three categories create the overall look and feeling of Restaurant A but individually may also offer different meanings. The artwork, statues, décor and sounds have been divided into three different categories; those that have been imported from Myanmar, *images, elements and sounds related to Burma*, and those that represent what I will call *general difference*, elements that have no direct connection to Burma but present the aura of difference and otherness, and finally what will be identified as *familiarity via difference*, elements that offer the diner terms or elements that are connected to other gastronomic cultures outside of Myanmar but present gastronomic outsiders with difference that they may be familiar with.

The modes discussed that are identified as being *related to Burma*, have either been purchased or imported from Myanmar, as reported by the interviewees. While the second category, *general difference*, is composed of interior elements that create the idea of otherness for the restaurant patrons. These modes are mostly composed of items purchased at local department stores based or as the Manager notes, “*some of these items we just brought from our home*”. These décor items have not been imported from Myanmar and as reported by those interviewed do not have a direct connection to Burmese culture or Burmese gastronomy. Potentially those who are culinary-insiders or insider-outsiders may notice that these modes are not related to Burma and perceive them to have a negative effect on the restaurant authenticity. For others who are less attuned or familiar these elements simply create the feeling of otherness.

The final category, *familiarity via difference*, is made of elements that represent something in-between otherness and familiarity. Within this category I have also included the general atmosphere of Restaurant A in which I discuss the lighting of the restaurant.

The lighting of the restaurant is described as being “dark” by both the Cook and the Manager, however the Cook offers that this lighting decision could make gastronomic insiders feeling uncomfortable. Additionally I will also describe the general layout of the menu, as the Manager and Server suggest that it has been designed to fit the eating style of the general American public. As Li has offered, “All immigrants and their succeeding generations find their traditional foodways altered to some degree to adjust their sense of ethnic identity and their relationship to the larger united American society⁴⁷”. Within this classification I will also identify elements that present difference with gastronomic terms that are borrowed different culinary cultures outside of Myanmar. As Ashcroft argues, “individual cultures are at no point free from the dynamic flow of cultural interchange⁴⁸” and as van den Berghe echoes within the urban context and specifically ethnic food gets, “get recreated, transformed, and reinterpreted⁴⁹”. These offer diners something outside the dominant culture that may have previously experienced, in effect bridging the gap between what is other and what has been absorbed by the dominant culture.

3.1 Images, elements and sounds related to Burma

The first section modes to be discussed are elements that Restaurant A has imported from Burma. While I cannot confirm or discredit the true origins of these products, I have chosen to identify them as *images, elements and sounds related to Burma*. The first items logged for this study are sandalwood statues depicting Burmese women in different poses. The Manager offers that,

“I don’t think the people here really know about Burmese culture. To have any stereotypes yet. Cause the Burmese people they meet they just categorize them as Asian or Chinese[to which the manager adds] customers often ask us what Burmese people look like. So we just point to these Statues.”

⁴⁷ Li 2002, 343

⁴⁸ Hirsch 2011, 618

⁴⁹ van den Berghe 1984, 393



In the back of Restaurant A there are two different tapestries that hanging across from a private dining area. When asked about the tapestries the Server noted, *“We have gotten it from Burma”* [later adds] *“I actually don’t know [in reference to the age of the tapestries] but it is actually real a traditional Burmese tapestry with the sequence and the embroidery”*.



The Cook stated in a later interview stated, “*This [is a] traditional tapestry, you can get it only in Bagan [Myanmar]. Have you been to my country? [No I have not]. We made it by hand in Bagan. It’s very expensive. These are all handmade stuff*”.

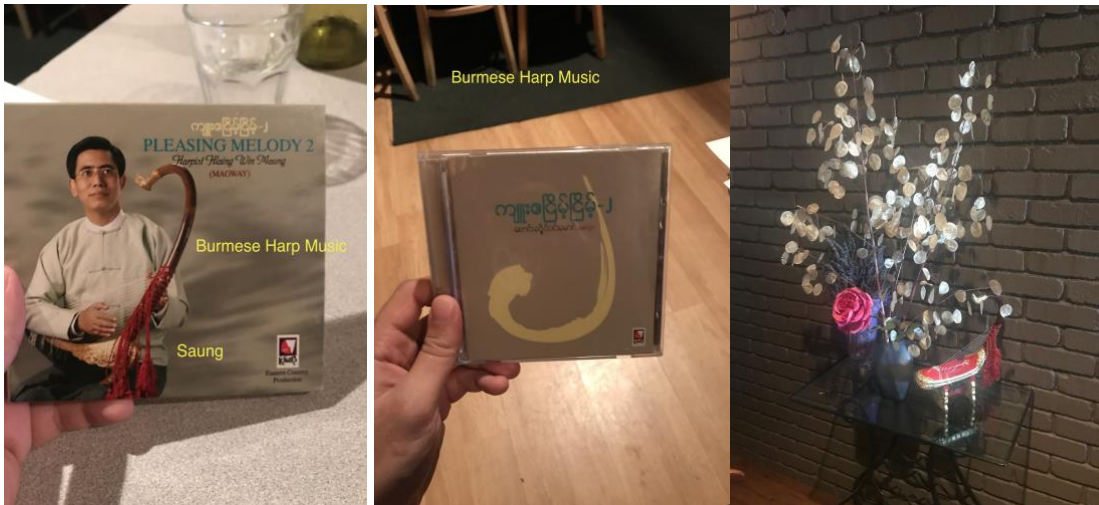
Bags

Along one wall of Restaurant A, there are is a group of bags, that have been imported from Myanmar, additionally a single red bag also hangs in the front of the restaurant. When asked about the origins of the bags, the Server identified them as “*Burmese school bags for children*”.



Music

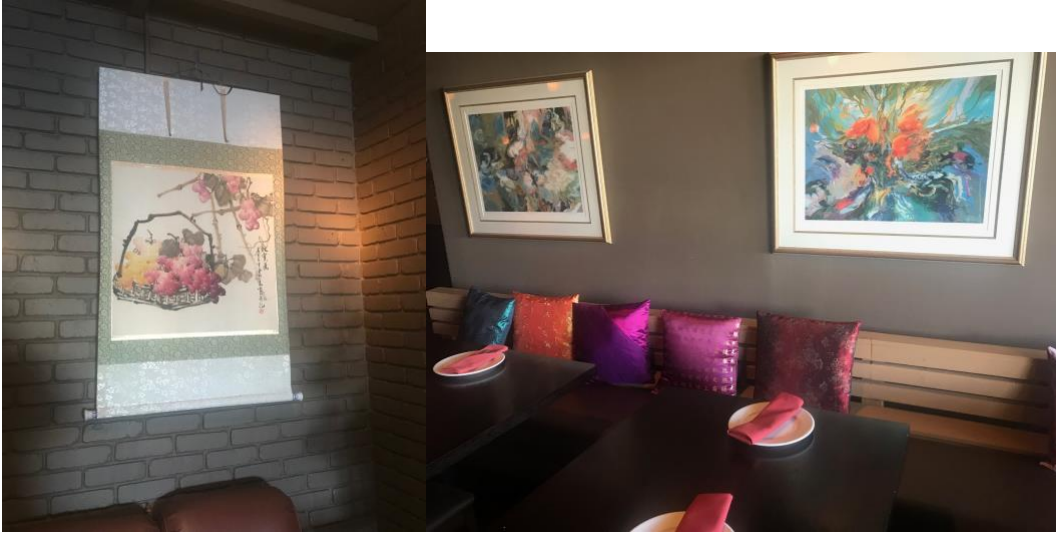
Along with the various visual elements imported from Myanmar, Restaurant A often plays *Pleasing Melody 2* by Hlaing Win Maung (Magway) a Burmese Saung player. However this compact-disc was not purchased by the restaurant and as the Manager says, “*This was actually a gift from a customer but now it is the only CD we play*”. Restaurant A also has a miniature version of a Saung located in the back of the restaurant.



3.2 General difference

This category of modes from Restaurant A contains images and items that do not have a strong connection to Burma or Burmese culture. A majority of these items were purchased at various local department stores or brought to the restaurant from the Manager's family's home. As stated in one of the interviews many of the restaurant's customers have little understanding or familiarity with Burmese culture, "*I don't think the people here really know about Burmese culture*". These elements offer more examples of otherness for the customer. While they may not offer the aura of authenticity, they can add to the diner's experience and in further expand upon the boundaries of us and them⁵⁰. These individual modes also differ from the category of *images, elements and sounds related to Burma*, because those products have a connection to the diner's understanding and expectations of a Burmese restaurant. Pictured below are of a Chinese wall-hanging and pillow cases with Chinese script.

⁵⁰ The relationship of "us and them" will be discussed in the chapter *Multiculturalism, orientalism and place*.



In reference to the pillows the Manager stated they were purchased at a department store, while the pillow cases were purchased from “*Chinatown*”, a neighborhood in an adjacent city. The painting on the wall was also brought from the owners’ home as the Manager states, “*We had bigger walls here to fill, just things we had lying at home*”.

Elephants

Throughout the restaurant I found various statues of elephants, when I asked the Manager about the origins of these statues they responded, “*The Elephant statues we got from Ross [department store] and Marshalls [department store]... Some of the other statues are from Cost-Plus [department store]*”.



The Manager also added that these statues represent their family business model and are not displayed because they are particularly related to Burmese culture. In reference to the statues the Manager stated,

“My dad chose elephants because doing business we should do it slow and steady as an elephant walks. [Does it have to do with Burmese culture or Burma] Not particularly because I feel like most of the elephants are in Thailand. Thailand and Burma are really close to each other, so I feel like it just mirrors off of that.

I think the notion of *“mirrors off of that”* can be interrupted as having multiple meanings, First while the geographic proximity of Thailand and Myanmar may establish some kind of connection for some diner, there is also greater chance that the diner may have experienced Thai cuisine. I believe the manager here is trying to establish that connection. The Cook also discussed this connection in reference to what the customers think of their restaurants, *“Whenever they [customers] see this is Burmese restaurant but to them sometimes we are very similar to Thailand”*.

Red Lantern and Golden Frog



In reference to these two modes that Manager clarified the reason for their inclusion in the restaurants by stating that they add, *“bits of color”* to the interior. Both items were also purchased locally. In reference to the lantern the Manager added, *“We just wanted some bits of red in the restaurant”* and when asked if there was any meaning of selecting the golden frog the Manager replied, *“No real meaning just looked Zen and the gold helped the dark area pop out”*.

3.3 Familiarity via difference

While the previous categories of modes have focused on presenting the aura of otherness or offering original objects from Myanmar, the final mode I will discuss, *familiar via difference*, presents diners with elements that bridge the gap between familiarity and otherness. Within this portion of data I am going to explore both the menu of Restaurant A

and the lighting of Restaurant A. Within this category we find the adjustment to taste, as identified by Li and Buettner, commonly associated with the immigrant restaurant experience. While I found that the objects of Burmese origin offered a kind of transferred authenticity to the restaurant, and *general difference* presented diners and customers with the feeling of otherness, the menu presents diners with both familiarity and difference.

While I will not be discussing the food served at Restaurant A, in terms of taste, ingredients or flavor, I think it is important to introduce elements of the menu including the general layout of the menu as well as the naming of specific dishes. MDA allows me to consider linguistic elements in addition to the visual elements in my analysis of Restaurant A. First in discussing the general layout of the menu the Manager adds, *“It definitely followed the, I guess American way of eating. You go starters, salads and soups seems like an appetizer sort of thing. And then you go with the lighter noodles dish and then you go heavier with curries and then entree⁵¹.”* As previously discussed, restaurateurs are often forced to adjust their food to the tastes of their new home, in the case of the menu layout as the Manager offers it has shifted to the *“American style eating”*. Here we see how Restaurant A presents the diner with a style of eating that they may be familiar with. Restaurant A is presenting difference, in terms of dishes, through the lenses of familiarity, menu structure.

In addition to adjusting the dishes served to the *“American way of eating”*, Restaurant A also utilizes terms from other cuisines as reference points for their diners. Two examples of this are the use of the words *Falafel* and *Empanada* as means to explain Burmese food to the diner. Both of these terms are not used in Myanmar and the Manager explains that,

“Oh yeah so same as when we were talking about empanadas, that’s another one we used. A lot of people ask if Burmese people do have falafels. But I have no other way of describing what that dish is because it pretty much is beans ground and deep fried. Beyago is the Burmese name.”

We can consider here the restaurant is aware of their diner’s familiarity of various cuisines, most likely because their diners live in a diverse and multicultural urban environment. The usage of empanada and falafels as means to explain Burmese cuisine to the gastronomic outsider shows how Restaurant A wants to present their diners with difference, that they

⁵¹ In the context of the United States entrée refers to the main-course of a meal.

are familiar with, as means to explain otherness they may have not experienced, Burmese cuisine.

When asked about the general atmosphere of the restaurant the Cook and the Manager offered different answers. The Manager offered,

“When we first opened the restaurant, we had the idea of opening more fast-casual just bowls of noodle soup, whatever could work. But then the contractor that we hired made this into a more beautiful restaurant than we would expect. With the decoration we felt we had a menu that would showcase the room. That's why we went with the sit-down family style restaurant. The colors we chose, I think my dad chose most of them, I guess the contractor gave us a general color scheme. We just went off of that. [Can you discuss the difference between a family-style restaurant and fast-casual restaurant] “Fast-Casual you would have a lot less nice decorations. We also dim the lights here and chose the dark colors sort of to an escape from where you are. When people come in here, they don't know that they are in [Location].”

While the Manager discussed the transportative nature of the lightning and general atmosphere of restaurant, the Cook offered the idea that lighting used, similar in the way the menu lay-out offers an element of familiarity to the diner, is an adaptation to local taste. The Cook stated,

“The look is fine but [for] our Burmese people [we] like Bright but here is not so much bright. In my country most of the restaurants are very bright. They open lots of lots of light inside. Because our country is warm, very hot country. They open the AC. [In Burma] For night dim is okay. But for here day or night they like. They [Burmese People] think that this is a night club. Night club is really dark like this. Dim light makes me sad [is what people in Burma would say about this restaurant]”

3.4 User-submitted reviews

The final component of the data portion of this study is a collection of user-submitted reviews for Restaurant A, from a popular travel website. While it is important to observe the development of the authenticity of Restaurant A internally, via the various modes discussed, the user-submitted reviews allow me to see what impact these modes have on the diners and customers of Restaurant A. While it would be naïve to except website-users to be aware of different conceptions of authenticity or that reviewers approach their evaluation of Restaurant A based on these modes, it does give us a picture of the diner's perspective.

For the purpose of protecting the identity of Restaurant A and its employees, the name of this website has been changed to *ReviewSite* and user will be identified numerically; *User 1*, *User 2*, *User 3*, etc. No information was taken from any of the Users' profiles including their other reviews or comments. Additionally the reviews referenced within this study have also been slightly modified⁵² as means to protect the anonymity of the reviewers and the restaurant. The reviews were originally collected from Restaurant A's *ReviewSite* page in December 2018, however one additional post from 2019 has been added to this study. Out of a total of twenty-nine reviews, seventeen have been selected for this study based on the use of terms that relate to this study. The range of the selected twenty-nine posts is from 2011 to 2019, include one post from 2011, one post from 2013, one post from 2014, five posts from 2015, seven posts from 2017, one from 2018, and a final post from 2019. In case of the Restaurant A's *ReviewSite* page some reviewers state that the restaurant serves Burmese food, while others like User 16 use the phrasing, "*Asian Food*". A number of these posts are connected to the large amount of "Asian" restaurants located near Restaurant A.

When looking at these user-submitted reviews, I will be analyzing what Kremer, Mansour, and Perry identify as the "wisdom of the crowd" or user submitted reviews which are used by customers to create "reputation systems" for different businesses⁵³. They argue that these reviews create a "feedback affect", which causes business to react based on the responses given by reviewers⁵⁴. According to Jeacle and Carter forty-million users generate over seventy-five million reviews on a monthly basis⁵⁵ and sites receive around three-hundred and fifteen million "unique visitors" each month⁷⁷. *ReviewSite* allows users to review different restaurants, hotels and travel destinations. In addition to giving each location a score out of five, with half points included, reviews include both a text portion

⁵² In terms of the modification of the user-submitted reviews the meaning and the context of the review has not changed but what has been adjusted is word choice and removal of any terms or phrases that could identify the restaurant. Original wording for reviews can be provided to thesis evaluators if needed

⁵³ Kremer, Mansour, Perry 2014, 988-989

⁵⁴ Kremer, Mansour, Perry 2014, 989

⁵⁵ Kremer, Mansour, Perry 2014, 990

⁷⁷ Hale, Blank, Alexander 2017, 48

as well as a title for the review⁵⁶. Scott and Orlikowski describe the process for leaving user-submitted reviews on a similar user-based review site,

“When starting a review, users enter the name of the hotel, restaurant or attraction, and if the target has been reviewed already, TripAdvisor suggests matches. User can choose to review an item that already exists in TripAdvisor, or they can create an entry for a new, previously unreviewed establishment. For each review, users must choose a star rating, ranging from one star (negative) to five stars (positive). It is not possible for users to post reviews without choosing a star rating⁵⁷”.

These user-submitted reviews have an impact on the overall ranking of the restaurant and the site. Hale, Blank and Alexander also argue that reviews have a significant effect for the various businesses discussed. As Anderson concludes, in their study of the impact of similar user-review oriented platforms on different the hospitality industry, “Reviews and review sites continue to be in the forefront when costumers are planning a hotel room purchase⁵⁸”. ReviewSite and similar online platforms have a significant impact on travel and dining options for those traveling, as well as locals.

Location of Restaurant A

A majority of the reviews on ReviewSite focus specifically on the location of Restaurant A. It is hard to ignore the immediate connections between the expectations of place that food adventurers possess and various users’ assessment of Restaurant A. As User 1 who casts doubts over the quality of the restaurant in their review but also writes, “*I choose to check it out and was pleasantly surprised at the lovely serene decor*”. Similar User 2 refers the restaurant as a “*hole-in-a-wall*”. Users 4 and User 5 both describe the location of Restaurant A being “*an indistinct strip mall*” and an “*out of the way shopping plaza*”. Out of the total of the 17 selected reviews, nine mention Restaurant A’s location similarly as being out of the way or indistinct. User 8 describes the exterior of Restaurant A as being, “*very drab and uninviting, but once inside it is very nice.*” User 13 asserts that, “*Restaurant A is an upscale restaurant in a downscale strip mall. It’s the only nice. Everything else*

⁵⁶ Hale, Blank, Alexander 2017, 49

⁵⁷ Hale, Blank, Alexander 2017, 49

⁵⁸ Anderson 2012, 11

looks, old, worn and dirty". User 11 describes the location as "*unassuming*" and User 9's review identifies Restaurant A as a "*little gem in a strip mall*".

Transportative dining

Multiple Users commented on the transportative nature of the restaurant within their reviews. User 1, poster June 2001 goes on to state that, "*the young women who waited on me was lovely, even switching the music. I wanted to hear Burmese music, it seemed so much more fitting for my meal and the beautiful surroundings*". Similarly User 3 describes the experience of dining in Restaurant A, "*When you enter the restaurant a great surprise greets you*". Another diner, User 7, relates their dining experience at Restaurant A to their time spent traveling in Myanmar, "*It has been some time since I have traveled to Myanmar, so it was fun and random to find this restaurant in [Location]. The staff were very sweet, just like the folks I met in Burma*". While other diners focus on either the locale or transportative nature of Restaurant A, User 4's review is the only example in which one reviewer attempts to assert their understanding of the cuisine of Restaurant A who wrote in their review, "*Just returned from a trip to Burma & enjoyed all the varieties of food served. I was pleasantly surprised at its authenticity [in reference to Restaurant A]*".

Décor and interior design

The most common response to Restaurant A's interior is that it is described as either "*peaceful*" or "*serene*", as User 3, User 12 and User 11 state within their reviews. While other Users; User 4, User 8, User 14, User 10 and User 16, simply describe the restaurant as having a "*nice atmosphere*", "*nice ambiance*" and "*pleasant environment*". User 15 describes Restaurant A has having unbelievable interiors and states "*It was so beautiful and homey in way...you would never have thought it could be like this inside*", User 3 echoes a similar sentiment by stating, "*When you enter the restaurant a great surprise greets you. A pretty and serene dining room*". User 17 states, "*inside of Restaurant A the decor is themed to fit the Burmese cuisine served*".

4 Multiculturalism, orientalism, place

One cannot discuss authenticity without first turning to the concepts of multiculturalism, orientalism, and place. Boli and Elliot explain the relationship between the concepts of multiculturalism and authenticity as being forever interconnected, “The ideologies of diversity and multiculturalism are inextricably intertwined with that of authenticity. Difference that is valuable is difference that is true, genuine and authentic⁵⁹”. It is this celebration and pursuit of difference, or otherness, that is a critical element of multiculturalism to explore in order to understand the pursuit of authenticity. When considering the visual and audible elements of a restaurant, which can both determine and develop their authenticity, these two aspects may provide the true difference that culinary-outsider desire from an authentic dining experience.

Multiculturalism 4.1

Multiculturalism can be identified as both, “the reality of a culturally diverse society and as the name of an ideology and set of policies that support the maintenance of such diverse cultural identities and traditions⁶⁰”. On one hand multiculturalism can be recognized as a situation in which individuals from various backgrounds live together in a community, whether it be a nation, neighborhood or city. On the other hand as Breidenbach summarizes, via the work of Charles Taylor and Will Kymlocka, multiculturalism can be seen as both an ideology and set of policies that creates a society where everyone is allowed to be different, display this difference and at the same time remain equal⁶¹. We can see multiculturalism functioning as national policy, in countries like Sweden⁶² and Canada, as well as in academic institutions and corporations. In its current state multiculturalism is much more than just a set of policies. Hesse offers the idea that multiculturalism,

⁵⁹ Boli and Elliott 2008, 548

⁶⁰ Breidenbach and Nyíri 2009, 159

⁶¹ Breidenbach and Nyíri 2009, 159

⁶² Boli and Elliot 2008, 542

”no longer simply signifies the celebration or problems of cultural diversity; or the limited constitutional recognition of cultural difference; it can also refer to antagonisms between the sacred and the secular, educational pluralism and the distribution of democratic rights in relation to ‘race, class, gender and sexuality⁶³”.

It is critical to note that multiculturalism does not naturally exist in heterogeneous or diverse societies⁶⁴. As Hedetoft explains multiculturalism, “more often than not is prescriptive⁶⁵”, something that diverse states are forced to establish through policy. Both Hage and Hedetoft trace the origins of, and need for, the implementation of multiculturalist policies to the middle of the twentieth century. As Hage argues in the mid-1960s we see the combination of the indigenous rights movements, the “rebirth of cultural groups that had previously been assimilated to the state, and large influx of ‘migration from the less developed parts of the world⁶⁶”.

A majority of these “less developed parts of the world” were composed of a mix of both geographically distant former colonies and countries that were closer in geographic proximity to Western Europe but as Hedetoft describes them, were still seen as “somewhat alien, backward and culturally or politically ‘strange⁶⁷”.

Hage adds that in addition to this influx of immigration, these individuals, based on the technological circumstances of the time period, could now remain in contact with people in their home country and thus hold on to aspects of their own cultural identity. He continues by stating for previous generations assimilation was in some ways the only option, based on both the technological limitations and the cultural realities of life in their new countries of residence⁶⁸. Another key component to multiculturalism’s growth, Hedetoft specifically discusses the Sweden context, was a vocal push from individuals with ethnic minority backgrounds who needed to, “personally spearhead and visibly embody a particular social trend, giving it both moral legitimacy and access to politics and the

⁶³ Bennett and Frow 2008, 488

⁶⁴ Bennett and Frow 2008, 488

⁶⁵ Hedetoft 2013, 319

⁶⁶ Bennett and Frow 2008, 492

⁶⁷ Hedetoft 2013, 319

⁶⁸ Bennett and Frow, 492

media⁶⁹”. Multiculturalism should not be seen as being synonymous or naturally occurring within diverse societies, as Hedetoft argues multiculturalism requires individuals with ethnic minority backgrounds working to give multiculturalism “moral legitimacy⁷⁰”.

Multiculturalism has required various environmental factors to be instituted as policy, however what is the impacts of these policies? In tracing the history of multiculturalism in the Great Britain, Buettner found that from the 1960s to the 1970s multiculturalism was seen as a force to combat ignorance and racism in Britain through the means of education. However the result of these policies, according to May, was “‘a well-meaning but ultimately vacuous approval of cultural difference’ as opposed to an effective strategy to counter racism and inequality⁷¹”. What May is pointing to is one of the failings of multicultural policies, while multiculturalist policies do attempt to construct a society that “approves of difference”, they fail to counteract systemic problems like racialization and social inequality. While multiculturalism promotes equality and diversity, in fact as many scholars will argue by harping on difference, multiculturalism only limits the individuality of a society’s citizens.

What one finds is that multiculturalism results in the essentialization of individuals. Essentialism can be defined as, “a process that treats groups as if they have a fundamental essence and so exaggerates differences and reduces similarities between groups while understating differences within groups³⁰”. The process of essentialization creates a climate in which we remove peoples’ individuality while highlighting difference for an entire group. Essentialization, via multiculturalism, ties one’s own identity to a single aspect of their life, for example their place of birth, often limiting an individual’s own personal history or experience.

⁶⁹ Hedetoft 2013, 323

⁷⁰ Hedetoft 2013, 323

⁷¹ Buettner 2008, 868

³⁰ Woodward 2000, 2301

4.2 Multiculturalism and food

Food represents one of the cultural identities and traditions that will forever be linked with multiculturalism and is so often championed as a success of a multicultural society. Van den Berghe contends that food as opposed to language or religion can transmit and share culture much more effortlessly⁷². Take for example the amount of time and determination required to become a fluent Finnish speaker, as compared to ease of sampling dishes deemed to be Finnish, e.g. consuming a *karjalanpiirakka* at a Nordic food festival. While one can imagine struggling for years to become a fluent Finnish speaker may give us a greater picture of Finnish culture, the consumption of a single Karelian pasty reduces this process to a matter of minutes.

For many the first image that appears in our minds when discussing multiculturalism is an international day at a university or some kind of city-sponsored world festival. One can imagine walking around sampling different dishes from various cultural representatives or institutions to enjoy all the benefits of a multicultural festival. Throughout the day we have to the opportunities to gain knowledge from the traditions observed or dishes consumed. However, as Boli and Elliot argue these ‘traditions’, identified and highlighted by multiculturalism, far too often represent what they identify as facade diversity. This manner of presenting diversity through the appearance of cultural preservation, “are facades that mask, and are generated by, the under-lying individualized world society⁷³”. Facade diversity can be found in the way that multiculturalism ascribes a kind of collective identity to those persons whose difference it tries to celebrate. Celebrating cultural diversity through international days at universities or in world festivals results in constructing singular versions of an individual’s cultural background and thus removing their own individuality, resulting in an essentialized version of the individual. Through these processes we see an individual reduced to an essentialized versions often connected to their national identity or place of birth.

⁷² van den Berghe 1984, 393

⁷³ Boli and Elliot 2008, 543

In this scenario one can picture, a foreign exchange student from Taiwan now forever interconnected with a single *Gua Bao*⁷⁴ or Punjabi students become constantly associated with Bhangra dancing. An example of the essentialization of identity, as Buettner notes, is found when discussing British tokenistic multiculturalism and how the imagery of South Asian individuals is taught in school. South Asian representation and identity is reduced to the ideas of “saris, samosas, and steel bands⁷⁵”. Here we can see how multiculturalism highlights the authentic difference and simultaneously limits and essentializes the other, in this case South Asians, to being connected to this difference.

Fish argues that what we do find with the linking of food and multiculturalism is a kind of *boutique multiculturalism*, in which there exists a fondness for the other, but this affection is closer linked to the concept of tolerance than acceptance⁷⁶. As Fish elaborates, “A boutique multiculturalist may find something of value in rap music and patronize (pun intended) soul-food restaurants, but he will be uneasy about affirmative action or downright hostile to an afrocentrist curriculum⁷⁷”. In this climate the other is a commodity⁷⁸ for a dominant culture to consume and gain capital from, while maintaining the ability to reject them. Their difference is tolerated because it both intrigues and offers something for the dominant culture to gain. The intrigue created by an ethnic commodity, food, in restaurants or food festivals constructs the appearance of cultural acceptance but this only exist on a surface level, as the other is never fully accepted. We can see how boutique multiculturalism functions when examining the way both interest and convenience factor into the desire of the dominant culture’s food choices. In the past ethnic gastronomies were consider too different, and thus needed to adjust to local taste. Later as ethnic cuisines have now adjusted to the demands of the dominant culture, they have lost the difference that once intrigued.

⁷⁴ A steamed bun with pork belly

⁷⁵ Buettner 2008, 867

⁷⁶ Buettner 2008, 869

⁷⁷ Fish 1997, 378

⁷⁸ In a later chapter bell hooks’ understanding of the commodification of the other will be discussed.

One could draw a connection between the concept of boutique multiculturalism and the realities of *cosmopolitanism*⁷⁹. We can trace the origins of cosmopolitanism back to the ancient Greek thinker Diogenes and their quote, in response to the question “Where are you from?”, “I am a citizen of the world”⁸⁰. This marks a manner of thinking in which one is rejecting the immediate, local or polis, in favor of larger scale thinking, the cosmopolis⁸¹. Without the abundance of difference, one could not live a cosmopolitan lifestyle, enjoying all the benefits that a diverse society has to offer. As Werbner states, “Because cosmopolitanism is the product of creativity and communication in the context of diversity, it must ultimately be understood...not merely as individual, but as collective, relational and thus historically situated⁸²”. For Warf cosmopolitanism is a testament to unities within humanity, a collective experience that is more commonly found within the urban context because of higher concentration of diverse peoples⁸³. As Warf chronicles in their study of “global cities” and cosmopolitanism, urban centers are representative of a larger percentage of immigrants in the United States. In fact, in 2010, thirty-eight percent of foreign-born individuals living in the United States were concentrated in the five largest cities in the country⁸⁴. Warf continues to state that out of the three largest cities in California, Los Angeles, San Jose and San Diego, foreign-born residents represent between 23.5%-36.7% percent of the population of each city.

While Warf urges us to recognize the positive aspects of cosmopolitanism, Hannerz understands cosmopolitanism “as a ‘mode of managing meaning’ [that] relies on ‘the willingness to become involved with the Other, and the concern with achieving competence in cultures which are initially alien, relate to considerations of self as well⁸⁵’”. Hannerz

⁷⁹ Hannerz offers that *cosmopolitanism* can be defined as, “A climate of opinion distinguished by the absence of narrow national loyalties or parochial prejudices and by a readiness to borrow from other lands or regions in the formation of culture or artistic patterns (Hannerz 1999, 398).

⁸⁰ Warf 2015, 930

⁸¹ Warf 2015, 930

⁸² Warf 2015, 930

⁸³ Warf 2015, 940

⁸⁴ Warf 2015, 936

⁸⁵ Hirose and Pih 2011, 1484

understands within a diverse urban landscape cosmopolitanism and one's relationship with the other, is always in relation to the dominant culture. The so-called competence in alien cultures serves to benefit the self, but we can question what this "competence" actually means and is actually for. Is it just competence in an essentialized version of a group's gastronomic products and does the competence benefit these "alien individuals"?

The so-called benefits of cosmopolitanism, diversity in gastronomic options being just one example, are advantages specifically centered on the dominant culture. In line with this understanding of cosmopolitanism, Ghassan Hage proposes concept of *cosmo-multiculturalism* or what he calls "multiculturalism without migrants⁸⁶". Hage explains that,

"In the sphere of culinary practices, and this is indicative of whole series of field of cultural practices, multiculturalism increasingly denotes a primarily city-based touristsitically oriented and consumer-centered world of ethnic restaurants and ethnic eats⁸⁷".

Involvement with the other, through the consumption of their food, proves to benefit members of the dominant society, and as Hage later argues the image of the entire country. Knowledge of the other cultures, Hannerz describes them as being alien to individuals, operates as intellectual currency, cultural capital, for those living in cosmopolitan situations. In his study of ethnic restaurants in Sydney and the surrounding suburban areas, Hage found that both the number of ethnic restaurants and the number of ethnicities represented is critical in determining a neighborhood's multicultural value. As Hage uncovers in his research, a vital aspect of cosmo-multiculturalism is not just the diversity that it presents but also the quality of this diversity. "The high culture end of cosmo-multiculturalism aims precisely to boast an Australian culinary scene capable of competing with the best in the world, providing Australia with means of international culinary distinction⁸⁸". For example the culinary outsiders from central Sydney travel to Western Sydney, suburban area, in search of authentic food and the multicultural experiences. These individual's culinary "adventures" showcase the wealth of Sydney's culinary multicultural experience. Cosmo-multiculturalism serves as means to benefit the culinary prestige of the

⁸⁶ Hage 1997, 116

⁸⁷ Hage 1997, 112-113

⁸⁸ Hage 1997, 117

nation, for Hage Australia, and the culinary outsider, those traveling from central Sydney to the suburbs of Western Sydney to eat, but within this relationship the migrant experience is removed from the equation.

4.3 Diversity in the US context

In terms of diversity and the existence of a multicultural society in the United States, these ideas predate any European arrival to North American. “Multiculturalism is neither new nor a threat to the stabilization and integration of American society. It is a, “continuing presence that...[reflects] a civilization whose character and temperament have long reflected the diversity of its people⁸⁹”. This excerpt from Parrillo’s is the conclusion of the author’s argument that multiculturalism in the United States has existed even prior to colonists arriving in the 17th century. However, as Parrillo argues often a popular narrative or “historical myth” constructs the idea that prior to various immigration booms the United States was a mostly homogenous country and that the “assimilation” of various colonist occurred rapidly⁹⁰. Parrillo’s work chronicles the concept of *the Mainstream American* and how different groups overtime are amalgamated into this term. As Parrillo reports in the 1890s Mainstream Americans were comprised of solely British American, including Scottish, Irish and Welsh individuals, but by 1896 this concept expanded to include other European Americans, for example Scandinavians, Dutch and French Canadians as well⁹¹. By the 1970s when, after the removal of immigrations quotas⁹² and expansion of immigration from outside of Western Europe, the notion of Mainstream Americans, “expanded to include “anyone of European Origin⁹³”. Parrillo notes here that this still excludes both African Americans and Native Americans from being consider Mainstream Americans.

⁸⁹ Parrillo 1994, 543

⁹⁰ Parrillo 1994, 538

⁹¹ Parrillo 1994, 538

⁹² Starting with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 and the later 1965 amendment to the same act.

⁹³ Parrillo 1994, 538

Parrillo's understanding of the manner in which the title of Mainstream American continues to exclude those without any European background may appear to go against the rather popular idea and narrative of the "American Melting Pot". As Hirschman, via Gordon, determines, although the melting pot image of the United States was supposed to represent a "land of opportunity", in which one's country of origin, racial identity or religious beliefs should not impede their personal success. "While the melting pot images suggests a blending of cultures, the process was essentially one of 'Anglo-conformity'⁹⁴". Hirschman's discussions on Anglo-conformity are in line with Mintz's assertion that immigrant restaurateur must "Americanize" their cuisines to survive life in the melting pot; as Restaurant A does with their "*American-style menu*". When taking a closer look that the myth of the melting pot, we discover not so much a blending of cultures and celebration of difference but a process of Anglo-conformity" and adjustment to the dominant culture.

It is critical to note that various immigration quotas have been put in place throughout the history of the United States to limit immigration from countries outside of Europe, more specifically Western Europe. In this section I will briefly detail specific changes in immigrant quotas and policies of the United States of America. The brevity of this discussion is based solely on the constraints of this study and in no way an attempt to dismiss the impact various immigration policies changes had on those entering the United States. As the restaurant featured within this study is operated by individuals who would have been prohibited from migrating to the United States prior to 1952, I feel it is critical to detail these changes in policy as means to also contextualize the "newness" of Restaurant A's food in relation to other cuisines within the United States.

The Immigration Act of 1917, following a wave of post-World War 1 nationalism and as Mendelson describes sense of disdain for "all things foreign", "created a 'barred' zone to halt immigration from Asia", as well as instituting literacy tests for new immigrants⁹⁵. This 1917 Act was the first step towards the creation of immigration quotas and restrictions. The later Emergency Quota Act of 1921 was the first policy to establish

⁹⁴ Hirschman 1983, 398

⁹⁵ Mendelson 2010, 1017

immigration quotas based on an individual's national origin in order to preserve the same numbers of racial diversity documented in the 1910 US census⁹⁶. As Mendelson argues, this act comes from a eugenicists' perspective and that "gave a presumably scientific validation to immigration [racialized restrictions and quotas]" as well way to return to an imagined idea of an both racially and ethnically homogenous American past⁹⁷. As Mae M. Ngai details the use of dated census dates and the dismal of non-white Americans including Indigenous Americans, African Americans, Chinese American, Japanese Americans, South Asian Americans, as well as people living in Hawaii, Alaska and Puerto Rico removed them from having "American Nationality"⁹⁸. As Mendelson concludes,

"In racially reconstructing America, the quota laws simultaneously reimagined the nation's political and civic identity. By erasing the very existence of minorities, the law likewise minimized their claim to recognition and entitlement. The legal distortion of the population bolstered arguments about the dominance of 'white America'⁹⁹".

The quota policies instituted in the 1920s defined American identity as white identity and linked American Citizenship to whiteness¹⁰⁰.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 removed the previous racial limitations linked with US citizenship and naturalization, however the act still maintained national quotas and allowed for extremely restricted amounts of immigrants from what was identified as the "Asian Pacific Triangle"¹⁰¹. It is not until a 1965 amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act effectively removes national quotas. As Clark, Hatton and Williamson state, "The 1965 legislation (effective 1968) abolished the quotas so that immigrants from all countries could compete more equally for the available visas³⁹",

⁹⁶ Mendelson 2010, 1020

⁹⁷ Mendelson 2010, 1021-1022

⁹⁸ Mendelson 2010, 1023

⁹⁹ Mendelson 2010, 1025

¹⁰⁰ John Hartigan Jr offers that, "Whiteness, thereby stands as a concept that reveals and explains the racial interests of whites and links them collectively to position of racial dominance (Hartigan 1997, 497)".

¹⁰¹ Mendelson 2010, 1029-1030

³⁹ Clark, Hatton, Williamson 2007, 361

opening the United States to increased immigration from South and Central America, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. Mendelson maintains that this removal of immigration quotas was drastically impacted by the wave of ongoing civil rights movements taking place in the United States at the same time¹⁰². By 1970 the number of immigrants entering the United States from countries outside of Europe, surpassed those coming from the European continent¹⁰³. In 1986 another adjustment to the Immigration and Nationality Act allowed immigrants who had been previously been deemed “illegal immigrants” to receive legal documents based on the Immigration Reform and Control act of 1986¹⁰⁴.

4.4 Orientalism

At the heart of this study is the relationship of “us and them”, whether it be our understanding of ethnic food in relation to our own gastronomic identity and experiences or the distinction of who is a culinary outsider versus who is a culinary insider. If we consider the user-submitted reviews from ReviewSite, they are nothing more than a documented interaction between us, in this case the reviewer, and them, the food of the other. It is unreasonable to offer any discussion of different manifestations of us and them without touching on the notion of orientalism. What is orientalism other than, “A practice that designates in one’s mind a familiar space which is ‘ours’ and an unfamiliar space beyond ours which is ‘theirs’¹⁰⁵”. In addition to creating the boundaries of us and them, one also seeks to understand and define the “them” as means to comprehend “us”¹⁰⁶.

Orientalism was first published in 1976 by post-colonial scholar Edward W. Said, who states, “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’¹⁰⁷”. The concept of orientalism centers around an uneven relationship between

¹⁰² Mendelson 2010, 1032

¹⁰³ Parrillo 1994, 539

¹⁰⁴ Clark, Hatton, Williamson 2007, 360

¹⁰⁵ Haldrup, Koefoed, Simonsen 2006, 175

¹⁰⁶ van den Berghe 1984, 395

¹⁰⁷ Said 1979, 1

the Occident and the Orient, in which the Occident both constructs the idea of the Orient and is influenced by this constructed understanding of the Orient. The idea of the Orient differs between the European and American context. From the European perspective the Orient has been seen as the Middle East, while in the context of American orientalism the Orient is more connected the 'Far East'¹⁰⁸.

As Said argues "The Orient was almost a European invention, and has been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences¹⁰⁹". Choi adds to this notion by stating that "Western Europe used these understandings to undergird their imperial projects where a rational, masculine and powerful Occident was constructed against a feminine, exotic, weak, irrational 'Orient'¹¹⁰". The Orient is created by the Occident and then mined for inspiration, as well as the fact that orientalist thinking fuels the Occident's continued motivation for mining the Orient. Similarly as Asad argues, orientalism is much more than just the investigation of the Western view of the East but in fact "an analysis of the authoritative structure of Orientalist discourse¹¹¹". Adding that this process of the orientalist discourses has been historically repeated over and over again, creating and cementing our understanding of the Orient.

Considering we are going to explore how restaurants are designated as being authentic based on their appearance and sounds, we will be exploring how the idea of authenticity is constructed by the customer's orientalist expectations. Authenticity is constructed from various perspectives, what may appear authentic to one group, may be inauthentic to another, but within this construction of authenticity lies different understandings of the same culture one wants to declare authentic. For example we can consider a culinary outsider declaring the authenticity of an Oaxacan restaurant. This declaration is based on their own ideas of what is Oaxacan cuisine or what an authentic Oaxacan restaurant 'ought to be', not just in terms of the culinary elements of the restaurant but visuals and audible elements as well. Within this example of the culinary outsider and

¹⁰⁸ Choi 2016, 521

¹⁰⁹ Said 1979, 1

¹¹⁰ Choi 2016, 522

¹¹¹ Prakash 1995, 204

the Oaxacan restaurant, one can imagine how the understanding of Oaxacan cuisine, or even culture, has been constructed and cemented over time for and by gastronomic outsiders. When reflecting on the case of Restaurant A, we must keep in mind what expectations customers may have of a restaurant serving “*Burmese delicacies*”.

As orientalism centers around the West’s power over the East and the authoritative nature of the West in relation to the East, Prakash offers an example of orientalist thinking understanding of the Indian subcontinent. Gyan Prakash writes,

“With India defined as Hindu, and Hindus identified with Sanskrit, Brahminical Hinduism emerged as the essential India, opposed to Europe, or, what amounted to the same thing. Its childhood. To examine how Sanskritic and Brahminical Hinduism was authorized as the ‘essence’ of India is to turn a critical gaze on Orientalist scholarship¹¹²”.

Prakash’s account of the orientalist view of the Indian subcontinent can still be found in the reality of facing South Asian restaurateur in Britain. As Buettner describes most Indian restaurants in Great Britain are owned and operated by Pakistanis or Bangladeshi immigrants¹¹³, yet they run ‘Indian restaurants’. While the culinary origins of the dishes produced may be from the same region the use of the terms Indian Food or Indian restaurant represent the essential desires of their own customers. Here we see how those characterized and essentialized by the Occident use orientalist constructions to benefit their own businesses.

But this process of self-orientalizing or taping into the orientalist views of the dominant culture is in no way a new concept. As Choi chronicles, in their study of La Choy Food Products, the process in which an early-twentieth century Korean immigrant, Ilhan New, was able to both navigate American orientalism as well as use this orientalist notions to his own benefit. Choi states, “Asian immigrants used Orientalist discourse to negotiate a ‘space’ that benefited their material experiences in some capacity emerges as one fruitful result of exploring the interstices and the overlapping and oftentimes contradictory dynamics of Orientalism¹¹⁴”. Ilhan New’s La Choy Foods tapped into an idea of “Chinese-

¹¹² Prakash 1995, 204

¹¹³ Buettner 2008, 896

¹¹⁴ Choi 2016, 522

ness” desired and created by American orientalist, however as Choi points out these benefits were often only material or financial in nature. Choi concludes that, “[in reference to the benefits of financial success that Asian entrepreneurs have achieved] had little to do with the reality of race relations in the USA that continued to discriminate against Asian immigrants even as American culture embraced the invented Orient of chow mein and chop suey¹¹⁵”. Despite achieving becoming fiscally successful, Ilhan New still remained outside the concept of being a Mainstream American¹¹⁶. While Choi is chronicling the experiences of a Korean immigrant in the early twentieth century, both before and after the Chinese Exclusionary Act and the Immigration act of 1924, we can still apply the way orientalist thought provides immigrants with opportunities, in terms of material success but at that same time has an impact on their rights or acceptance within society. As discussed even though orientalism is based on western understandings of the other, these concepts and ideas are in no way hidden from restaurateurs. In fact restaurateurs often choose various elements of their restaurant’s interior design because of orientalists’ expectations. In discussing an early twentieth century Indian restaurant in London, Veeraswamy’s, Buettner concludes that both the décor of the restaurant and clothing of individuals who worked at Veeraswamy’s provided customers with “an Oriental dream”¹¹⁷. Buettner states,

“Turbaned Indian waiters provided service considered “an Oriental dream” amidst Indian carpets, chandeliers, punkahs (fans), and other decorative accoutrements intended to connote the luxurious “East”. Diners who wanted to be treated like “sahibs¹¹⁸” again by attentive “native” servants and cooks had come to the right place¹¹⁹”.

While Veeraswamy’s is more focused on duplicating or recreating the feeling of the British Raj for British citizens who had returned from their time on the subcontinent, we still can see the transportative nature of the “Oriental dream”. Recreating the feeling, sights and sounds of the British Raj to remind diners of British colonial paradise.

¹¹⁵ Choi 2016, 532

¹¹⁶ Parrillo’s understanding of Mainstream Americans being from an Anglo-background and later expanding to include someone from any European background as well.

¹¹⁷ Buettner 2008, 873

¹¹⁸ A polite term used to address an individual, similar to using Sir or Mam.

¹¹⁹ Buettner 2008, 873

Orientalism also has a strong connection to the concept of authenticity. While the Occident often constructs the idea of the Orient, this idea must at the same time be an authentic version of the Orient. How can those aiming participate in authentic experiences navigate what is and is not authentic? “The authenticity of the consuming cosmopolitan self depends on the authentication of the consumed Oriental gastronomical other¹²⁰”. The authenticator, in this case a modern-day cosmopolitan relies on the other being authentic. They themselves have certain expectations of what the “Oriental gastronomical other” should be. Take for example workers at a Cantonese restaurant, in order to be authentic, they should appear, dress and talk in certain authentic ways. If cosmopolitan diners are visiting restaurants whose staff do not have a connection to the cuisine being served, from an Orientalist perspective, either based on their appearance or perceived ethnicity or nationality the diner has chosen an inauthentic experience. This decision by the diner reflects negatively on their own self assessed authenticity. As both Pih and Hirose argue, “the authenticity of the self co-emerges with the authenticity of the other¹²¹”. Only if the restaurant is deemed authentic, according to Pih and Hirose based on a number of factors including the appearance of the restaurant and the staff of the restaurant, can the experience truly be deemed as authentic for a cosmopolitan diner.

4.5 Place

A cornerstone of Cowen’s guide to eating is the idea of traveling outside of one’s geographic “comfort-zone” in search of good food. For a food adventurer¹²² the sense of danger adds to the eating experience, just as bell hooks describes the added spice of ethnicity that members of the dominant cultures enjoy when adding ethnic food to their dull eating routines¹²³. I have discussed an example of this when detailing culinary outsiders who travel to restaurants in Sydney’s western suburbs. I will be considering how

¹²⁰ Hirose and Pih 2011, 1488

¹²¹ Hirose and Pih 2011, 1487

¹²² A food adventurer is an individual who is searching for new and undiscovered gastronomic cultures (Heldke 2003, 15). This concept will defined and discussed in a later chapter.

¹²³ hooks 1992, 370. I will touch on hooks’ work more in the chapter *Ethnic food*.

a restaurant can be identified as being authentic, without considering their flavors, selected ingredients or preparations of their dishes, incorporating the role of place and location into the diner's expectation of authenticity is critical. As discussed in the data portion of this project and the user-submitted online reviews used within this project the location of the restaurant selected is both consistent with Cowen's description of an area that produces "good food" and can be seen in the way diners review the restaurant.

It is important to consider what role place plays in the relationship of food and the eater. We cannot start to examine place without also turning to the concept of space. Cresswell, via Tuan, argues that the two words are necessary in defining each other¹²⁴. He argues, again via Tuan, "if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place¹²⁵. Angew identifies place as being a meaningful location based in three different essential aspects; location, locale and sense of place¹²⁶. Location here represents a fixed space, while for Angew locale means, "the material setting for social for social relations – the actual shape of space within which people conduct their lives as individuals¹²⁷". While location may be linked with a fixed place, it does not mean that for Angew place is stationary. Angew offers the example of ship but in keeping with the field of gastronomy we can consider a food truck. Which is mobile often travelling to various locations in a single day but during these several stops offers the same distinctive sense of place and locale. Sense of place is the emotional connection that individuals have toward a given place¹²⁸. As Relph states "To be inside a place is to belong to it and identify with it, and more profoundly inside you are the stronger is the identity with the place¹²⁹". Place is thus

¹²⁴ Cresswell 2004, 605

¹²⁵ Cresswell 2004, 605

¹²⁶ Cresswell 2004, 574

¹²⁷ Cresswell 2004, 589

¹²⁸ Cresswell 2004, 589

¹²⁹ Cresswell 2004, 1913

a way through which we can consider and comprehend the world around us¹³⁰. We have certain expectations and preconceived notions of what a place does or does not have.

As place is how we consider and navigate the world, place defines inclusivity and exclusivity. David Harvey argues that place is responsible for fabricating the difference between “us” and “them”¹³¹. In this situation place is being used to designate ownership and connection to a specific area; a neighborhood, a strip mall or even an entire country, as well as tell individuals who is an insider versus who is an outsider to this specific place. As numerous Users identify in their reviews for Restaurant A as being both distant and hidden. It is impossible to ignore connections here to Said’s concept of Orientalism that is, “a practice that designates in one’s mind a familiar space which is ‘ours’ and unfamiliar space beyond ‘ours’ which is ‘theirs’¹³²”. Culinary outsiders who dine at Restaurant A are traveling past their own place, to an unfamiliar space. We see how this functions in Hage’s research in the Western Sydney suburbs. Gastronomic outsiders travel to neighborhoods in which there is clear sense of place that for the outsiders is both unfamiliar and beyond their own space. We can consider how an aspect of the consumption of authentic food or food that is authentically different involves engaging in spaces that are beyond our own. If these diners are traveling an extensive distance in search of the food of the other than they are clearly traveling to a space outside of their own.

One example of where we see place, authenticity, ethnicity and food collide is in Anderson’s study of an area in Vancouver, British Columbia that since the late nineteenth-century has been identified as Chinatown¹³³. Many often assume that neighborhoods like Chinatown, often identified as ethnic neighborhoods, develop based on, “evidence of a naturalized connection between Chinese culture¹³⁴” and thus a place where Chinese immigrants to Canada chose to settle. This in fact overlooks the factors that determined an ethnic neighborhood’s location. What appears to be a “natural connection” is in actuality

¹³⁰ Cresswell 2004, 691

¹³¹ Cresswell 2004, 1835

¹³² Haldrup, Koefoed, Simonsen 2006, 175

¹³³ Cresswell 2004 1254

¹³⁴ Cresswell 2004 1254

more often determined by the dominant culture's view of the outsider. Often migration to these specific urban areas, in some cases suburban, was based on the dominant culture's rejection of the other. For Chinese community in Vancouver's Chinatown, Anderson offers the notion that place for Chinatown represented inferiority in comparison with the rest of the city of Vancouver. The neighborhood was seen as a "natural center of vice and depravity, full of dirt, disease and moral failures (opium dens, gambling and prostitution)¹³⁵". In this example place and the word Chinatown is a signifier for the other, as well as creating a place for "them", the Chinese community in Vancouver. As Sack states, "place depends on people, who construct and organize it. In these complex ways, self and place are themselves mutually constitutive¹³⁶". Anderson adds that although the neighborhood now is looked at from very different perspective, as compared to in the late nineteenth century, it still represents a place "where white tourists can visit the "exotic other" and enjoy the old ideas and depravity in a sanitized form¹³⁷". We still see the effect of exclusivity existing in this example of place.

One can draw a connection between Cresswell's understanding of place and Sack's assertion that place is determined through a mix of both social power and territorial rules¹³⁸. Social powers, in Cresswell's example of Chinatown, being the factors that lead to Chinese immigration to this neighborhood in Vancouver, and territorial rules being "what is and is not a place¹³⁹". Sack, using a similar model as Bruner, approach place from the perspective of an "outdoor social history museum", whose territorial rules determine how visitors experience the museum¹⁴⁰. Whether this be where they walk, what they can and cannot interact with or what objects are deemed acceptable by some kind of museum authority to be present within this "place". Sack expands beyond the confines of a museum by stating,

¹³⁵ Cresswell 2004, 1254

¹³⁶ Sack 1993, 326-329

¹³⁷ Cresswell 2004, 1254

¹³⁸ Sack 1993, 326

¹³⁹ Sack 1993, 326

¹⁴⁰ Sack 1993, 326

“Cities exist because their jurisdiction are recognized; stores exist because property rights are maintained; highway and telephone poles function because rules exit prohibiting people from walking or camping highways and from using telephones for fuel¹⁴¹”.

We can consider place in terms of restaurants existing and defining what the diner can expect based on the location of the restaurant, as Cowen’s guide describes and Hage discusses in the case of Sydney but also internally as how one navigates said place. As gastronomic outsiders how do we approach dining with the other and what expectations do we bring to each meal? What social power and territorial rules determine the relationship of us and them for a culinary outsider and how do these factors combine and shift with changing notions of Mainstream American or the culinary hegemony?

¹⁴¹ Sack 1993, 327

5 Ethnic food

It would be impossible to discuss authentic food without covering the concept of ethnic food. As discussed, adventurous eaters often search for different, other, cuisines to consume and gain something beyond sustenance. In this relationship ethnic food represents food that is other or different. In fact, as Stuart Hall suggests in *New Ethnicities*, ethnic is just another way to say difference or other¹⁴². One can trace the origin of term ethnicity to the middle of the twentieth-century, as a term that was used a new way to describe difference. As Stamenova notes, “It replaced the concept of race and was used to explain lasting inequalities as grounded in unchangeable, deeply rooted diversities¹⁴³”. Büscheges expands upon this idea by stating, “It should be emphasized that ethnic and other social identities are essentially based on a combination of self-perception and external attribution¹⁴⁴”. A key element of this understanding of ethnicity is that it has both developed internally as well as has been assigned externally. An individual’s ethnicity is relational, based on both place and those who surround the individual. The same can be said for ethnic food, as we define what qualifies as our own food and what is the food of the other or ethnic food. The relational nature of ethnicity is just another relationship centered around the dichotomy of us and them. What is different, then, becomes ethnic, in relation to our own perspective. Restaurant A is identified as an ethnic restaurant by both ReviewSite and their customers because they serve food outside of the dominant culture.

5.1 What is ethnic food?

While usage of the term ethnic may be viewed as a fairly new conception, as Nandy argues the concept ethnic cuisines are in no way a new notion. Ethnic food or the food of the other has always been both subjected to a gastronomic hierarchy or order as well as being relational to one’s own culinary understandings. As Nandy states,

¹⁴² Ray 2016, 3

¹⁴³ Stamenova 2017, 314

¹⁴⁴ Büscheges 2015, 109

“There always were ethnic cuisines, though nobody called them so. The cuisines of others were always a part of one’s life-as markers of cultivation and class as indicators of social status, or as esoteric rituals, meant for adventurers, travelers and beginning in the nineteenth century, the anthropologists¹⁴⁵”.

Hirose and Pih suggest that, “ethnic food is ‘ethnic’ only to the extent that it is served to those who are not ‘ethnic’¹⁴⁶”. Ray expands upon this idea by stating that in the American context that “the collective category of the ‘ethnic’ as a flattening and meaningless pen to hold all non-white, non-Anglophone others¹⁴⁷”, or those who fell outside of the category of Mainstream American. Here Ray is identifying that in the case of the United States, ethnic food whether it be the food of German or Italian immigrants living in early nineteenth century New York City or a group of restaurateurs from Xi’an in modern day San Diego they are, or were, labeled as ethnic because they are the other. If we also here consider Parrillo’s concept of Mainstream American, one can see how the concept of what is considered an ethnic cuisine can shift over time. Just as Mainstream American expands to include those with “European Backgrounds” one could track the trajectory of ethnic food identification to potentially follow a similar path.

Turgeon and Pastinelli opted for a wider definition and of the ethnic restaurant by stating that it can be identified, “as being a restaurant whose signboard or publicity clearly promises the national or regional cuisine of another land¹⁴⁸”. Turgeon and Pastinelli include the wrinkle of regionality to their understanding of ethnic restaurants, however for them the term ethnic is still used to identify a restaurant that is different from the norm. Ethnic food is always relational to the dominant culture. Whether it be based on regionality in the same nation, for example food of the American South being treated as an ethnic cuisine in Burlington, Vermont or conversely food from outside of that nation i.e. a restaurant serving Cantonese food in New York City, ethnic food always represents what is different in

¹⁴⁵ Nandy 2002, 246

¹⁴⁶ Hirose and Pih 2011, 1485

¹⁴⁷ Ray 2016, 3

¹⁴⁸ Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002, 252

relation to the dominant culture. As Pierre L. van den Berghe summarizes ethnic cuisine only can exist when insiders encounter outsiders, “It takes a ‘them’ to define an ‘us’¹⁴⁹”.

If we understand ethnic food as to be the food of the other, the other of course being determined by a dominant culture, and ethnic restaurants to be places that serves the food of the other, how does this impact our own understanding of ethnic food in relation to our own food experience and culinary identities? Nandy details the hierarchical nature of ethnic food in discussing both his understanding of the food of his home, Bengal, as well as how European cuisines function in the United States¹⁵⁰. Different cuisines, regional or national, are delegated for specific occasions. In the context of the United States, and to a lesser extent Europe, Nandy concludes that French or “Frenchified” food is the most revered ethnic cuisine¹⁵¹. In discussing Bengali food the author states, “There still a persists the belief that you do not eat Bengali in a restaurant; you eat it at home, or on formal occasions like marriages and anniversaries¹⁵²”. In the case of Bengal, ethnic cuisine that is eaten outside the home, restaurant food, is mostly made up of North Indian or Mughlai food and European cuisines, French or Italian food filtered through the lenses of the British Empire¹⁵³. Nandy’s examples highlight what is considered ethnic is relational to the point of view of the diner and that within the prism of ethnic cuisines there exists a gastronomic hierarchy. As the Cook notes in discussion of the relationship of Thai cuisine and Burmese Cuisine, diners may be more familiar with Thai foodways. I am not trying to assert that Thai foodways have become a “non-ethnic” cuisine but it could be rank as more familiar based on the culinary hierarchy that diners at Restaurant A maintain.

Both popular and critical discourses are filled with studies and stories of how ethnicity is preserved and created through food, standing resiliently in the face of the

¹⁴⁹ van den Berghe 1984, 395

¹⁵⁰ Nandy 2002, 247

¹⁵¹ While Nandy’s argument is rooted in the historical prestige of French Cuisine in the “Western World”, French cuisine represents a different position in the culinary hierarchy and even according to Ray would no longer be considered an ethnic cuisine.

¹⁵² Nandy 2002, 247

¹⁵³ Nandy 2002, 247

multiculturalist melting pot¹⁵⁴ of western society¹⁵⁵. While I have discussed how certain representations of ethnic identity may thrive in the multiculturalist environments such as an international food festival in which essentialized versions of various cuisines are celebrated, these environments are not representative of the realities of a multicultural society. A society in which individuals from various background interact and share different culinary processes and manners of thought. In discussing ethnic cuisine within urban environments van den Berghe contents that, “In fact, ethnic cuisine no more withers away in the urban cauldron that does ethnicity itself¹⁵⁶”. As stated earlier urban centers are, in the context of the United States, home to greater numbers of individuals from different backgrounds. At the same time, he argues that within these urban metropolitan locales ethnic food does not remain static. In fact, according to van den Berghe ethnic cuisines in these surroundings, “get recreated, transformed, and reinterpreted¹⁵⁷”.

Ethnic food is relational and often abundant in urban centers, but how else is it understood by the dominant culture. When looking at the relationship of multiculturalism, food and consumers of ethnic food hooks writes, “encounters with otherness are clearly marked as more exciting, more intense, and more threatening¹⁵⁸”. Eating ethnic food, the other, provides individuals with both a sense of excitement and fear. In their work *Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance* bell hooks states that, “Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture¹⁵⁹”. Moreover, ethnic food celebrates differences in a way that both further exploits the other and thus maintains the status quo¹⁶⁰. For hooks in commodity culture, ethnic food

¹⁵⁴ As discussed, the image of the melting pot often conjures up images of diverse cultures blending together but all too often melting pot, in the context of the United States is more directly linked with the Anglo-fication of different cultures.

¹⁵⁵ Holtzman 2006, 366

¹⁵⁶ van den Berghe 1984, 393

¹⁵⁷ van den Berghe 1984, 393

¹⁵⁸ hooks 1992, 370

¹⁵⁹ hooks 1992, 366

¹⁶⁰ hooks 1992, 369

will always remain an exploitation of the other, through which the dominant culture gains something from the other. Often the relationship of a member of a dominant culture and the ethnic food they choose to consume centers on the myth of neutrality of the dominant culture in relation to other that is being consumed. Meaning the dominant culture views itself as a culinary neutral relying on the added spice of ethnic cuisine to enhance their gastronomic choices.

While we can be critical of those searching to consume the other to “spice up” their dull lives as, Uma Narayan notes, “Eating in the Other’s restaurants, ‘contributes to the economic survival of immigrants and the desire of culinary novelty making a positive difference to the profit margin¹⁶¹’”. While we can question and critique the limitation of the ethnic restaurateur in a multicultural society, Narayan is arguing that despite this cooking provides economic opportunities for these individuals. Similarly based on a study of ethnic restaurants in Quebec City Turgeon and Pastinelli determined that most owners of ethnic restaurants did not have prior experience working in the food industry, the same situation is discussed in Ray’s work *The ethnic restaurateur*. Despite the fact they lack gastronomic work experience,

“Many immigrants become restaurant owners for the simple reason that the host society asks for ‘authentic’ ethnic cuisine prepared by authentic ethnic people and at the same time, the society provides immigrants with the opportunity to start small businesses, to attain a certain level of financial autonomy, and to become a part of the working world¹⁶²”.

Hirose and Pih echo this conclusion of their study of the relationship of orientalism and authenticity dining experience. A restaurant’s authenticity is often determined by the constructed racialized expectation of the diner¹⁶³. These expectations are based on orientalist ideas and generalization of the cuisine, and cultural linked to that cuisine, that is served in the restaurant. Turgeon and Pastinelli describe the immigrant experience here through the lens of the dominant culture, in which the immigrant restaurateurs cater to the culinary desire of the dominant culture in order to attain, “*a certain level of financial*

¹⁶¹ Ray 2016, 6

¹⁶² Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002, 256

¹⁶³ Hirose and Pih 2011, 1499

autonomy and to become a part of the working world'. Within this quote we see the symptom of multiculturalist societies, which require those who are different to fulfill roles that highlight their difference. Ethnic restaurateurs must navigate a fine line between being identified as authentic or being labeled as inauthentic.

5.2 Cultural capital and the consumption of the other

As discussed, the consumption of ethnic food does not just revolve around nutrition and flavor but on the knowledge acquired from consumption. As hooks identifies the spice of ethnic food consumption offers something much more than nourishment to diners. Later in this study I will explore Heldke's concept of food adventurers and their quest for what is different or authentic. Heldke, in discussing her own experiences as a self-identified *food adventurer* states, "that I achieve status because I display familiarity with a cuisine that others haven't discovered or are just now discovering¹⁶⁴". A core component of the food adventurers' quest is possessing knowledge about cuisine that others around them have not yet discovered and devour, or as hooks would say a 'new seasoning'. Boutique multiculturalism centers around the other, and their difference, providing some kind of capital, knowledge, for members of the dominant culture or even the nation. Similarly, cosmo-multiculturalists gain capital from the so-called diverse eating options their urban lifestyle provides them. There is a direct correlation between these pursuits of knowledge through the consumption of the other and Bourdieu's conception of cultural capital. Bourdieu understands capital as existing in four manners:

"capital is broadly defined by Bourdieu (1986) as comprising: economic capital or conventional wealth; cultural capital which includes the formal and informal knowledge an individual acquires over their lifetime; social capital pertaining to resources that may be available to an individual by virtue of the relationships and reciprocal obligations they possess; and finally, symbolic capital, which denotes that the form of capital an individual possesses confers status and is recognized (or misrecognized) as legitimate by the field¹⁶⁵."

¹⁶⁴ Heldke 2003, 15

¹⁶⁵ Stringfellow, MacLaren, Maclean, O'Gorman 2013, 79

It is hard to ignore the connection between cultural capital, knowledge, and the non-nutritional benefits that gastronomic outsiders receive from their consumption of new or undiscovered cuisines. Consumers of the food of the other acquire this cultural capital slowly overtime, through both “formal and informal knowledge”. If we consider hooks’ understanding of the role ethnic food plays in amongst the culinary hegemony and both the relational and hierarchal nature of ethnic cuisines, we can find that cultural capital gained from the consumption of the other is one of the driving forces behind an eater’s desire to consume ethnic cuisines.

Bourdieu argues that cultural capital can be found in three different states, *the objectified state, the embodied state and the institutionalized state*¹⁶⁶. Cultural capital in the embodied state is seen as cultural knowledge that is accumulated through time. Embodied cultural capital is something that an individual cannot receive instantaneously but is capital that one obtains throughout the course of their life and inherits, not genetically, from those surrounding them often parents or family. Bourdieu affirms that, “Like the acquisition of a muscular physique or a suntan, it cannot be done at second hand (so that all effects of delegation are ruled out¹⁶⁷)”. In the context of gastronomic outsiders gaining cultural capital from the various dishes they consume; they must acquire this knowledge over time, as it is impossible for them to comprehend new cuisines instantaneously. If ethnicity is synonymous with otherness or difference, then one must invest significant time to the develop of their own expertise in understanding this otherness, to achieve the status of an insider-outsider. Similarly, one cannot simply purchase knowledge of the gastronomic other, they need to develop their understanding and expertise over time¹⁶⁸. Culinary outsiders striving to gain knowledge of the other’s food and the process of achieving this kind knowledge require both the use of capital and time. While it is not possible to directly transfer cultural capital to economic capital, over time the knowledge acquired could lead to an individual earning economic capital.

¹⁶⁶ Richardson 1986, 17

¹⁶⁷ Richardson 1986, 18

¹⁶⁸ Richardson 1986, 18

Whereas the embodied state of cultural capital is connected to knowledge, objectified capital is related to the items and goods through which one displays their cultural capital, for example an extensive collection of first edition novels or mid-century modern furniture displayed in someone's home¹⁶⁹. Embodied cultural capital has direct ties to the amount of economic capital an individual possesses¹⁷⁰. Without economic capital the individual is unable to obtain the goods needed to display their embodied cultural capital. While those consuming the other are mostly concerned with the cultural capital in the embodied state, food knowledge acquired over time, one can imagine culinary outsiders filling their home with cookbooks of the other or various cooking utensils used in other cuisines as means to display their objectified cultural capital. Bourdieu's final understanding of cultural capital in the institutionalized state. While embodied cultural capital according to Bourdieu has "biological limits" based on an individual's surrounding, institutionalized cultural capital offers a form of certification through which one identifies the cultural capital one possesses¹⁷¹. As Bourdieu asserts,

"With the academic qualification, a certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture, social alchemy produces a form of cultural capital which has a relative autonomy vis-à-vis its bearer and even vis-à-vis the cultural capital he effectively possesses at a given moment of time¹⁷²".

Documents and certifications from various institutions are used as means to guarantee one's cultural capital. Institutionalized capital is a more difficult way through which gastronomic outsiders, food adventurers and consumers of the other can achieve cultural capital. In order to achieve this form of cultural capital, they must acquire some form of former culinary training that could be viewed as transforming them in some ways from outsiders to insiders.

Within the relationship between authenticity, ethnic food and a culinary outsider, the outsider's desire to acquire something beyond nutrition and sustenance from the food

¹⁶⁹ Richardson 1986, 19

¹⁷⁰ Richardson 1986, 19

¹⁷¹ Richardson 1986, 20

¹⁷² Richardson 1986, 20

they consume can best be described as the pursuit of cultural capital, in this case gastronomic knowledge of the other. While Bourdieu offers three different states of cultural capital, I find there is connection between the embodied state of culture capital knowledge acquired over time and effort, that directly connects with the experience of food adventurers. As Heldke describes, discussing herself, they can, “achieve status because I display familiarity with a cuisine that others haven’t discovered or are just now discovering¹⁷³” They may also pursue objectified cultural capital through the purchasing of epicurean items, i.e. cookbook, as Heldke details in her work on Thai cookbooks. If a food adventurer was to enroll in culinary education programs; culinary school, apprenticeships or stage to gain institutionalized cultural capital, the process of pursuing institutionalized cultural capital may result in shifting the individual from a culinary outsider to an outsider-insider.

¹⁷³ Heldke 2003, 15

6 Authenticity

On a general level, Appadurai suggests that authentic can be simply defined as an instrument that roughly, “measures the degree to which something is more or less what it *ought to be*¹⁷⁴”. Using Appadurai’s definition of authentic as a starting point, in this chapter I will explore what factors contribute to how a cuisine or dish can be identified as “what it ought to be”. I will begin by discussing Bruner’s understanding of authenticity in historic reproductions and explore the anthropologist’s four senses of authentic in relation to the phenomenon of authentic restaurants and authentic food. Next, I will discuss who can authenticate food and what it means to be a culinary authenticator. Finally I will address the concept of authentic food and why this use of authenticity will not be discussed with in this study.

6.1 Restaurants as reproductions

Anthropologist Edward Bruner suggests there are four different “senses of authentic¹⁷⁵”. Bruner expands upon Appadurai’s introductory understanding of authenticity in order address how authenticity is manufactured from different perspective and for different viewpoints. His four senses of authenticity attempt to acknowledge the impact of who, whether it is various individuals or an organization, is doing the authenticating and whom this authentication is for. This understanding of four different forms of authenticity is based on his examination of a historical reproduction of Abraham Lincoln’s nineteenth-century home in New Salem, Illinois. I feel this understanding of authenticity in historical reproductions connects directly to the way in which we discuss authenticity and food. One can approach a restaurant as a kind of reproduction as well, either from the perspective of the amount of standardization required to operate a restaurant or from the standpoint that restaurants are often attempting to reproduce foodways or gastronomic cultures in regions or locales that may differ from the culinary origin of the dishes served.

First, we can turn to the perspective of restaurants being reproduction based on the standardization required to create and serve the same dishes on daily basis. Every cook or

¹⁷⁴ Buettner 2008, 883

¹⁷⁵ Fiol 2010, 31

chef is instructed to reproduce each individual dish in the exact same manner as they were designed over the course of days, weeks, or even years. Priscilla Ferguson approaches food from different classifications; *markets*, *menus* and *meals*¹⁷⁶. Ferguson states that the *market* is where a material good, ingredient, is transformed into a commoditized good¹⁷⁷. The commoditized good is then prepared in manner that makes it safe to consume and as a *meal* that is, “not so much a product as a process-or, more accurately; a cluster of processes that create and sustain collective identity¹⁷⁸”. The standardization, specifically safe-cooking methods, required of Ferguson’s *menu* classification is how restaurant food is a form of reproduction. The *menu* classification of food is built upon both standardization and reproduction of the same commoditized good to guarantee food safety and additionally the same consistent taste within the *meal* classification. Ferguson offers that the nature of restaurants, both standardization of taste as well as standardization for health standards makes restaurant’s an example of a reproduction.

While Ferguson is concerned with both the making and standardization of food can define a restaurant as a kind of reproduction, Russek, whose work focuses “foreign restaurants” in Post-World War I United States, even goes as far to identify these restaurants as “reproductions¹⁷⁹”. Russek offers the distinction that in the early twentieth century one could categorize specific public dining spaces as either a “foreign restaurant” or “foreign-themed” restaurant¹⁸⁰. The author adds, “the two categories help explain how restaurants specializing in reproductions of global cultures and foodways, rather than those serving actual foreign dishes, changed the taste of local American food¹⁸¹”. With this distinction Russek offers the idea that reproduction are imitations of “global cultures and foodways” that add elements of adjustment to local taste and dining practices. I offer this

¹⁷⁶ Ferguson 2005, 680

¹⁷⁷ Ferguson 2005, 689

¹⁷⁸ Ferguson 2005, 689

¹⁷⁹ Russek 2011, 47

¹⁸⁰ Russek 2011, 35

¹⁸¹ Russek 2011, 35-36

second understanding of restaurants as reproduction not to discern the authenticity of different dishes but more simply to offer another historical use of the defining of restaurants, specifically restaurant who can be characterized as serving the food of the other, as reproductions. The distinction being that Ferguson is more concerned with the process of producing dishes within restaurant defining it as a reproduction, while Russek is more concerned with the notion of imitations of various global foodways being reproductions as opposed to being original.

While restaurants can be defined as a reproduction, we can also see similarity in the transportative nature of the dining having similarities to a historical reproduction. In the same manner in which a historical reproduction tries to transport individuals to a time and place, in the case of Bruner's to Lincoln's 19th century Illinois home, restaurants historically have similarly tried to transport their customers to different locales. As Russek's, via Takakai, work on Post-World War I US restaurants identifies, "Many Chinese restaurants, motivated by the tourist economy, cultivated exoticism in Chinatown restaurants for non-Chinese tourists seeking 'picturesque foreignness'¹⁸²". Similarly Buettner identifies how Indian restaurants in Great Britain attempted to reconstruct the colonial feeling of the British Raj based on both the clothing and language used by their employees, as well as via the décor of their restaurants. The idea of transporting diners to faraway lands or different time periods is also discussed in the work of Lucy M. Long who uses the term *culinary tourism*¹⁸³. Culinary tourism involves an individual's use of food as means to, "to try on new identities and explore alternative ways of life¹⁸⁴" and that "Such an experience, she stresses, involves a conscious choice to step outside one's traditional cultural landscape and explore unknown sensory¹⁸⁵". Just as visitors to a reproduction home attempt to experience the past and "step outside" their own time period to explore the past.

¹⁸² Russek 2011, 40

¹⁸³ Ellis 2009, 55

¹⁸⁴ Ellis 2009, 55

¹⁸⁵ Ellis 2009, 55

6.2 Bruner's four senses of authentic

Within Bruner's first sense of authenticity he explores the notion that for a historic reproduction to be considered authentic it must both be "credible and convincing"¹⁸⁶. In Bruner's case study he argues that the reproduction of Lincoln's 1830s New Salem, Illinois home must be a convincing replica of the past for those who are visiting the historical site in the present. It is important to note that this sense of authenticity is related to an individual in the present believing a replica is a "convincing" representation of the past, a past they have never experienced. As Bruner states the goal of this sense of authenticity is, "to produce a historic site believable to the public, to achieve mimetic credibility"¹⁸⁷. One could draw parallels between this understanding of authenticity and food, by arguing that restaurants can be declared authentic if they appear to be both "convincing and credible" to the culinary outsider. Culinary outsiders have the same relationship with the certain ethnic restaurants as modern tourists have to a replica of a historical site. Just as the tourists visiting this historical site are gaining cultural capital, historical knowledge, from visiting the site, the culinary outsider gains their own cultural capital from consuming different cuisines. Gastronomic outsiders, just as tourists are not perceptive of certain details from the past, may not be aware of the nuances a specific culinary culture and thus restaurants deemed authentic by them may not be viewed in the same light by culinary insiders.

In the context of Restaurant A, we can consider both the mode category of *general difference* as well as the *elements and sounds related to Burma*. These two groupings of modes connect to different understandings of authenticity, *General difference* constructs a feeling of otherness but when combined with *elements and sounds related to Burma* is able to appear convincing to the diner. Here we see the weaver, Restaurant A, creating a convincingly authentic restaurant by combining two groups of mode that relate to authenticity differently.

Inversely Bruner's second sense of authentic, "complete and immaculate"¹⁸⁸,

¹⁸⁶ Bruner 1994, 399

¹⁸⁷ Bruner 1994, 399

¹⁸⁸ Bruner 1994, 399

argues that a reproduction can only be authentic if someone from the intended time period and location of the replica would recognize it as authentic. In the context of New Salem it must be reproduced “as the village would appear true in substance, or real¹⁸⁹”. One could apply this sense of authentic to restaurants as well by stating a restaurant can only be identified as being authentic if it appears authentic to a culinary insider. While believability, Bruner’s first sense, is related to outsiders authenticating. This provides us with a puzzling situation when considering the relationship culinary outsiders have with a restaurant. For some culinary outsiders there could be markers that make them believe the restaurants “complete and immaculate”. As Hage discovered in an interview with a cosmo-multiculturalist who travels from central Sydney to nearby suburb, Cambramatta, in search of Vietnamese food.

“...two weeks ago we decided to go to Cambramatta for lunch because a friend of ours is going to live in Laos and we took her there for her birthday, and it was so good going up there; we went to this restaurant and we were the only Caucasians in the restaurant and we didn’t know what to order, and everything was in Vietnamese and nobody spoke much English so we were just pointing to what other people had and ordered that¹⁹⁰”.

From this excerpt we see how the culinary outsider recognized the authenticity of this particular restaurant via the credibility the restaurant receives from their Vietnamese customers and use of Vietnamese language. Although the outsider does not use the word authentic in their description of the restaurant, as van Berghe offers gastronomic outsiders often judge a restaurant’s authenticity based on the patrons of said restaurant. If too many culinary outsiders are eating at the restaurant, in the case of this example the gastronomic outsiders being “the only Caucasians” dining at that time, it will instantly be deemed inauthentic¹⁹¹. In the case of the posts on ReviewSite, we do not find any kind of reference to the restaurant being discredited because it does not appear authentic to an insider.

Bruner’s third sense of authentic is “being original, as opposed to being a copy¹⁹²”. Bruner argues that this means that no reproduction can ever be considered authentic. In the

¹⁸⁹ Bruner 1994, 399

¹⁹⁰ Hage 1997, 133

¹⁹¹ van den Berghe 1984, 394

¹⁹² Bruner 1994, 400

case of the New Salem house it can never be identified as authentic. Fiol draws a connection between Bruner and Walter Benjamin who states, “Precisely because authenticity is not reproducible, the intensive penetration of certain (mechanical) processes of reproduction was instrumental in differentiating and grading authenticity¹⁹³”. While Benjamin is discussing the reproduction of art and Bruner is dealing with historical reproduction, one could similarly apply this manner of thinking to food, as Russek does when distinguishing between the ideas of foreign and foreign-themed. If authenticity is only linked with originality then no reproduction, i.e. dish served in a restaurant, could ever be identified as authentic. The act of cooking a dish in a restaurant involves the standardization and mechanization of various processes and ingredients in order to produce the same quality, for example the taste and appearance of a dish¹⁹⁴. Just as Russek describes the foreign-themed restaurants who produced diluted versions of certain dishes being identified reproductions.

However, Bruner introduces an additional component to his third understanding of authenticity. He argues that using authentic, original, elements in a reproduction can impact the overall authenticity of the reproduction¹⁹⁵. Bruner identifies that Lincoln’s New Salem home contains some elements that are from the 19th century. Although the reproduction home was made in a different time period, the original objects contained within the home create “the aura of authenticity¹⁹⁶”. He argues that there is a transferring of authenticity that occurs between the object and the reproduction. One can also observe this transfer of authenticity in restaurants as well.

Hage, in his study of Vietnamese restaurants in Sydney’s western suburbs, notes that Vietnamese-Australian restaurateurs “many of the restaurant owners know that the absence of signs in English is a good way to attract Anglo customers¹⁹⁷”. Similarly van den Berghe argues that Chinese restaurateurs are aware of that customers who identify

¹⁹³ Fiol 2010, 31

¹⁹⁴ As identified by Pricilla Ferguson’s idea of Markets, Menus and Meals.

¹⁹⁵ Bruner 1994, 400

¹⁹⁶ Bruner 1994, 400

¹⁹⁷ Hage 1997, 138

themselves as “connoisseurs” of Chinese cuisine often refuse to eat in restaurants that either offer them forks or do not provide chopsticks¹⁹⁸”. While these diners rely on original elements within these restaurants to evaluate their authenticity, as well as the taste of the restaurants. Here we see how the owners construct the idea of authenticity for the customer by using original elements in their restaurant design, in this case Vietnamese signage or the expectation of specific utensils. In the case of Restaurant A we find that they have a number of modes imported from Myanmar, including statues, tapestries, as well playing traditional Burmese harp music. I argue that these elements present the diner with the aura of authenticity and can transfer their authenticity to Restaurant A.

The fourth and final sense of authentic, for Bruner, is related to the process through which a reproduction can be authenticated. Bruner states that for something to be declared authentic it must be “duly authorized, certified or legally valid” by some kind of authority¹⁹⁹. Bruner describes the early stages of the authentication process for New Salem as being highly contested by various interest groups. Different groups of museum professional, Lincoln’s own relatives, former residents of New Salem and researchers attempted to come to a consensus of what the reproduction appearance should be. Bruner also argues that for most visitors to the reproduction this aspect of authentication is less visible than other forms of authenticity, unless there is an element of the controversy about the authentication process that is visible in public discourse²⁰⁰. For example, if someone were to discredit one of the groups or individuals involved in the authentication process.

The linking of authenticity and various interested groups who evaluate historical reproductions, calls into question who has the capacity to authenticate. Bruner offers the idea that, “Who has the authority to decide which version of history will be accepted as the correct or authentic one²⁰¹”. The New Salem house is authenticated by local authorities, the Illinois State Government, and by group of “experts” involved in the building of the reproduction, scholars, museum curators, New Salem residents both past and present, etc.

¹⁹⁸ van den Berghe 1984, 393

¹⁹⁹ Bruner 1994, 400

²⁰⁰ Bruner 1994, 400

²⁰¹ Bruner 1994, 400

In the restaurant world the power to authenticate can be seen from multiple perspectives for example the prestigious food critic working at a local or national periodical, a customer posting on social media about the restaurant or the food influencer or a blogger who occupies a space somewhere in between the two. However, I think the process of authentication of restaurants, unlike the historical reproduction Bruner discusses, is not hidden from the culinary outsider. The rapid expansion of foodie culture and food based-media has made eaters aware of who is authenticating different dishes. As Anderson states, “Reviews and review sites continue to be in the forefront when costumers are planning a hotel room purchase²⁰²”. In the case of ReviewSite, which offers Users the opportunity to review hotels, businesses and restaurants, the reviews have a significant impact in on the other diners’ choices.

6.3 What is authentic food? Is there authentic food?

“For those who cannot, stomach art, or afford it, there is always the ethnic restaurant, where we can physically ingest the authenticity of others in order to renew our own²⁰³”.

Handler’s quote serves as a good introduction to the authentic eater and to the circumstances that arise when we see the word authentic paired with food or restaurants. It is important to note that the desire of authentic food does not reflect the eating habits of the general public, Heldke writes that this quest for authenticity “primarily affects those of us who look to acquire cultural capital by learning as much as possible about an exotic cuisine²⁰⁴”. There is a connection to hook’s understanding the role ethnic food plays amongst the culinary hegemony, as we can equate the cultural capital here hook’s added spice of ethnicity. Handler presents the persona the diner ingesting the authentic other, a cuisine or broadly speaking another culture. One can begin to understand that this kind of dining experience is not just restricted to filling one’s belly but also gaining something

²⁰² Anderson 2012, 11

²⁰³ Handler 1986, 4

²⁰⁴ Heldke 2003, 113

authentic from eating, cultural capital. Handler argues that when consuming authentic food the authenticity of that food is then transferred to the diner. Similar to both the way Bruner conceives of the transferable authenticity between historical reproductions and the original elements that make up the reproduction and to Bourdieu's thoughts on cultural capital; the manner in which possessing specific items can give an individual more cultural capital. We can also draw links to Long's concept of culinary tourism as consumers of authentic food view the consumption of various cuisines as a way to step out of their own understandings and thus explore and experience different cultures.

In terms of the American perspective Rachel Laudan argues that authenticity is centers on a fetishization of the "primitive past" in which authenticity is synonymous with terms like artisanal, pre-industrial, non-processed foods or even the use of indigenous ingredients²⁰⁵. Words like rustic or artisanal become important elements of authentic food for Laudan. Even though Laudan's definition connects to the idea authenticity to an imagined past free of the food issues of today, it still centers around the idea of authenticity being different than our own food. One could make a connection here to Rosaldo's idea of *imperialist nostalgia*, and the way, "we crave the new just because it is unusual, unexpected, different; differentness is something we have come to expect and require²⁰⁶". The difference that we crave is difference that is authentic. When we say authentic food, we have certain expectations of what we are going to get. Either it can be something that we connect to our constructed understanding of the past, a stone-ground rustic bowl of polenta, or inversely something that is so far outside of our own culinary understanding. Analogous to the way multiculturalism identifies difference and then features this difference, Lindholm sees our search for new tastes becomes a "moral imperative as the performance of difference through new and authentic food is seen as valuable in itself²⁰⁷". What is unfamiliar or new is valued for this difference or newness and often thus understood as being authentic.

In their study of "*No Asians working here*": *racialized otherness and authenticity*

²⁰⁵ Counihan, Van Esterik, 2012, 200

²⁰⁶ Counihan, Van Esterik 2012, 397

²⁰⁷ Counihan, Van Esterik 2012, 369

in gastronomical Orientalism, which explores online reviews of both Japanese and Chinese restaurants in two different cities in the United States, Akihiko Hirose and Kay Kei-Ho Pih observe that “the authenticity of the customer experience²⁰⁸” is directly interconnected with the “production of racial signification of the ‘Oriental other’”. Within their work they conclude that diner’s reviews consistently harped on the need for specific racialized identity of both restaurant servers and chef in order for the restaurant to be considered authentic²⁰⁹. For Hirose and Pih authenticity centers around the experience of the diner and their Orientalized understanding of a culture, location, as exhibiting their own “authenticity of whiteness²¹⁰”. Van den Berghe contends that ethnic restaurants can lose their appearance of authenticity if they start to cater to culinary outsiders²¹¹. Authentic food is therefore derived from different perspective, whether it be diners who crave the newness and equate this newness to authenticity or those who see authenticity as something rooted in past techniques of food production. Authenticity is not representative of a singular manner of production or origin. It is used differently, interpreted differently, and identified differently based on who is doing the authenticating.

Within this study I will not be exploring whether Restaurant A can be identified as authentic or inauthentic based on their food. I am not concerned with playing the role of the food adventurer, cosmo-multiculturalist or authenticator. If I were to consider the authenticity of the restaurant’s food, it would be approaching food from the perspective of Bruner’s first sense of authentic and focusing on the abilities of each dish consumed to be convincingly authentic. Furthermore, based on both the geographic and logistical constraints of this project, I believe that it would be impossible for me to amass that level of food knowledge and connection to food culture discussed to become an insider-outsider. As a gastronomic outsider I would be relying on information provided to me by culinary insiders and most likely an essentialized understanding of the dishes served at the selected restaurant. The use of various design elements of the restaurant and how these aspects of

²⁰⁸ Hirose and Pih 2011, 1482

²⁰⁹ Hirose and Pih 2011, 1499

²¹⁰ Hirose and Pih 2011, 1495

²¹¹ van den Berghe 1984, 394

the restaurant are able to construct authenticity for the diner, often a culinary outsider, allows me to explore the how authenticity is developed within the restaurant selected without needing to consider the food being served.

It is important to consider who is the one declaring a dish's or restaurant's authenticity, why is it important that this food is considered authentic, what makes one dish authentic and another dish insincere or fake. The authentication process results in a kind of standardization of a dish. One version becomes authentic while any others are fakes, replicas or imitations. As Minh-ha writes, "According to the context in which they operate the superfluous can become real; the authentic can prove fake; and so on²¹²". As a culinary outsider in relation to the restaurant discussed in this study, I would be relying on other aspects of the dining experience or the input of others to have any means to authenticate the dishes of this restaurant.

I believe it is important that we also ask the question what exactly authentic food is. If we continue to follow Nandy's introductory assertion that it is the way something ought to be, how do you we determine what something ought to be. As both Fitzgerald and Petrick suggest, "we depend on our previous gastronomic experiences to try to taste the past²¹³". Not only do our previous culinary experiences impact our sense of taste but every individual's sense of taste is unique. As Ferguson states, "Although as a species we share a taste for sugar and a distaste for bitter flavors, actual likes and dislikes largely reflect different cultures and milieus. Humans are omnivores; individuals and peoples are not²¹⁴". No two individuals can share the same palate, culinary experience, or sense of taste, nor can I hope to duplicate another person's sense of taste. It would thus be impossible for me to remain objective in analyzing the restaurant's dishes authenticity, as tourists who visit Lincoln's New Salem house used their surroundings to determine the reproductions authenticity, I would not be able to rely just on the foods taste to determine or even measure its authenticity.

²¹² Minh-ha 1989, 86

²¹³ Fitzgerald, Petrick 2008, 393

²¹⁴ Ferguson 2011, 372

6.4 Foodies and food adventurers

As Heldke offers those who crave so-called authentic dining experiences as not reflective of the general dining public but how can we identify these diners? Those who require authentic dining experiences are looking for more than just taste, they are searching for cultural capital. *Foodie* is a word that is often linked with those individuals whose interest in food far exceeds just simple enjoying a meal. For Bauman, Cairns, and Johnston they, “characterize foodies as people with a long-standing passion for eating and learning about food but who are not food professionals²¹⁵”. Here the authors make the distinction that to be considered a foodie, an individual must be passionate about gastronomy but not operating on a professional level. The authors add that foodie culture centers around a total obsession of food not just linked specifically single style of cuisine or price point of a restaurant²¹⁶. An individual who is a part of foodie culture can enjoy a four-hundred-dollar multi-course tasting menu at a chic Three-Michelin Star Manhattan restaurant on a Friday and a two-dollar slice of pizza the next evening. According to Bauman, Cairns and Johnston a foodie transcends high and low brow in an all-encompassing search for ‘good food’.

In their work *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer* Heldke introduces the term *food adventurer*, these are individuals who maintain a colonizing attitude toward food and are often involved in the authentication of food as well²¹⁷. Heldke argues that a food adventurer possesses an “obsessive interest in and appetite for the new, the obscure and the exotic” but at the same time views the dominant culture as both solely as a resource for the raw materials, other culture’s food, which serves their own interests²¹⁸. The food adventurers view the United States as culinary neutral and thus the perfect resource for the them to explore²¹⁹. This appearance of culinary neutrality for food

²¹⁵ Cairns, Johnston, Baumann 2010, 592

²¹⁶ Cairns, Johnston, Bauman 2010, 592

²¹⁷ Heldke 2003, 2

²¹⁸ Heldke 2003, 2

²¹⁹ Heldke 2003, 2

adventurers negates the diversity of culinary cultures that pre-date colonization of the United States and the reinforces the narrative of the American melting pot.

It is important to note that for food adventurers to find a restaurant authentic, they must also beware of the inauthentic. “Authenticity is valuable only where there is perceived inauthenticity²²⁰”. Food adventurers differ from foodies in a similar way that we can differentiate tourists and travelers. As Boli and Elliot argue, “Travelers (as opposed to tourists) wander the world in search of peoples and places authentically different from home²²¹”. While both tourists and travelers may share a passion for sightseeing, a traveler is in search of what is “authentically different”. Just as both foodies and food adventurers both obsess over food, the food adventurer is searching for the exotic, new and different. The food adventurers maintain a position that it is possible for them to discern what food is authentic and what is inauthentic, whether they are a culinary insider or gastronomic outsider. This unambiguous criteria that they possess is acquired over time²²². Similar to the manner in which Bourdieu conceives the acquiring of cultural capital, learned over a long period of time. Heldke writes, “I achieve status because I display familiarity with a cuisine that others haven’t discovered or are just now discovering²²³”. It is critical to note here that the food adventurer’s palate must not just be a cultivated palate but one that is informed about the specific culture they are evaluating²²⁴. Food adventurers search for raw materials, food, in order to transform them into cultural capital. Just as Bourdieu argues that one gains something from the authentic experience of being in the presence or even owning a piece of ‘high culture’, a work of art or an important work of literature, the food adventurer gains cultural capital with their consumption of authentic, often identified as ethnic food as well, food.

²²⁰ Sims 2009, 325

²²¹ Boli and Elliot 2008, 548

²²² Heldke 2003, 24

²²³ Heldke 2003, 15

²²⁴ van den Berghe 1984, 394

6.5 Who can authenticate?

What are the factors that determine what is and is not authentic? As stated, Bruner offers that idea that whoever is accountable for the authentication is able to craft the narrative of what is authentic, “Who has the authority to decide which version of history will be accepted as the correct or authentic one²²⁵”. While Heldke contends that food adventures learn how to authenticate through the knowledge they gain based on their consumption of various dishes. Handler identifies the origins of authenticity to be linked with “western anthropology not the culture they wish to authenticate²²⁶”. In this case we can see there is a historical precedent for the authentication process revolving around the outsider doing the validating. Jackson urges us to shift from discussing and debating whether cultural artifacts can be described as authentic and instead consider the authentication process²²⁷. It is this process that benefits the authenticator, and the authentic aspect of commodified culture that benefits the authenticator. Authenticity is something that serves the outsider, in the case of food the food adventurer who is more often than not a culinary outsider.

Post-colonial theorist Tran Minh-Ha offers the idea that authenticity for racialized people often functions as *planned authenticity*. A shift from the dominant culture’s desire to expunge differences to forcing the other to revel and celebrate this difference²²⁸. Minh-ha dives into the experience of non-racialized individuals challenging the other to be more authentic. The author presents a situation in which the other appears to be too “westernized” for those who wish to do the authenticating. We have seen this shift in the way the food of other, once too fragrant or too heavily spiced is, is forced to adjust to the palate of the dominant culture and then this new adjusted cuisine is later rejected for being too ‘Americanized’, ‘Westernized’, or simply being inauthentic. One could also draw connections here to the relationship multiculturalism and food. As discussed in a previous chapter, multiculturalism serves as means to manage diversity on multiple levels²²⁹ and

²²⁵ Bruner 1994, 400

²²⁶ Handler 1986, 2

²²⁷ Sims 2009, 324

²²⁸ Minh-ha 1989, 85

²²⁹ Buettner 2008, 868

creates a climate in which the individualized aspects of a person's life and identity are removed in the process. Planned authenticity functions to serve the needs and desires of the dominant culture for example to cosmo-multiculturalist yearning for an authentic plate of *Xiaolongbao*.

We have seen this process occur in Buettner's study of curry houses in the Great Britain. In which culinary outsiders no longer desire adjusted South Asian cuisine and now care this difference. She outlines this cycle of the culinary outsider's desire to authenticate,

“a variety of actors thus assert the value of Britain's curry tradition at the same time as other vigorously contest it, condemning its failure to be “genuine”. A popular activity among much of white British society that once found the smell of curry repellent²³⁰”.

In the case of South Asian cuisine in Britain it has been excluded, embraced and then rejected again. In their early years curry houses in Britain were labeled as cheap and unhygienic but at the same time celebrated for their generous portions and reliability²³¹. It is important to note that a majority of curry houses in Britain are owned and operated by working-class Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants, now second or third generation as well, who, “...provided cheap food to unsophisticated customers constituted their disreputable “other” and serve “Indian Food²³²”. In the late twentieth-century more high-end Indian restaurants opened in Britain and these eateries showcased “regional-Indian food” for the British consumer. Their food was presented as authentic representations of traditional dishes, while the curry houses' food represents cheap British versions of South Asian fare. Here we can see exactly how planned authenticity works. The group, Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants operated curry houses that serve ‘Indian food’, who are at first stereotyped and persecuted for the smell of their food, must adjust their own food to local tastes. Once the culinary outsiders discover their desire for authentic food, in the case of Buettner's work we see that this authentication process is aided by the marketing of higher end versions of South Asian cuisine the curry-fare, the inauthentic, is no longer desirable.

²³⁰ Buettner 2008, 898

²³¹ Buettner 2008, 884-885

²³² Buettner 2008, 896

6.6 Standardization of the other

I have tried to express how authenticity is incredibly complex and how it is relative to an individual's perspective and now I will explore what effect it has on those who are being authenticated. Before exploring how the authentication process of food leads to a standardization of the other, similar to the manner in which within multiculturalism, a celebration of difference, results in the essentialization of individuals, I will consider the relationship of the food of the other and the dominant culture. As means to discuss the process of so-called culinary integration that was introduced earlier in Bruner's and Li's work on immigrant restaurateurs in both Britain and the United States.

In their work on regional Mexican cuisine in South Texas, Mario Montaña found that following the Texas Revolution, late-nineteenth century, for Anglo-Texans "Mexican food symbolized everything that was degenerate and despicable about the conquered Mexican population²³³". Anglo-Texans would even use different food related terms as pejoratives for the Mexican population. Montaña details how through an Anglo-fication process the cultural hegemony transformed the food of South Texas, which often consisted of off-cuts, offal and was seen as too "greasy" and thus had historically been unappealing to the Anglo-Texan palate, into what is now called Tex-Mex cuisine. Montaña contends that we should not believe narratives that the acceptance of these dishes, he concentrates on two dishes *Menudo*²³⁴ and *Fajitas*, are due to a kind of "enlightenment of the dominant culture" but in fact the manner in which dishes have "been appropriated by Anglo culture and infused with different meanings²³⁵". The dishes have not been absorbed by the dominant culture but in fact taken and transformed by the dominant culture, in this case Anglo-Texans. In discussing this process and the dish fajitas Montaña writes,

"First, the lowly and despised food is thrown away by members of the upper class and picked up by hungry poor people. Then, the upper class appropriates and "improves" it so that it becomes

²³³ Montaña 1997, 51

²³⁴ A stew often made with tripe and red chilies.

²³⁵ Montaña 1997, 53

“civilized” and socially acceptable. Finally the food enjoys the status of delicacy that is legitimized and enjoyed by members of the upper class²³⁶”.

For me the words “improve” and “civilized” are stand-ins for the idea of standardization. A dominant culture takes the food of the other and then makes it legitimate and easily consumable by other members of the dominant culture. However to other culinary outsiders it may appear as if this cuisine has been integrated into the dominant culture, instead of being absorbed and appropriated.

Now that we have discussed how the dominant culture “integrates” different cuisines into their own culinary understanding, we can turn to the relationship of authentication process and the resulting standardization of the other’s cuisine. I have discussed how the idea of authenticity often comes from an outsider’s perspective and thus when authenticators are looking to identify what is or is not authentic, they tend to first isolate and identify what elements are different than those found in their own culinary background. Heldke offers the idea that, “exotic food is understood as authentic precisely because of its strangeness, its novelty²³⁷”. Just as hooks identifies that these “encounters with strangeness” offer both the feelings of pleasure and danger²³⁸. A dish cannot be authentic if it lacks strangeness or newness. Heldke argues that we, citing herself as a fellow authenticator and food adventurer, choose to connect this “strangeness” and unfamiliarity with it being “an essential part of another culture²³⁹”. Culinary outsiders, authenticators, identify what is different or other and then use this difference as means to mark what makes a dish authentic. One must then call into question the authentication process if what is authentic is different, we are only highlighting difference.

In their work *Authentic or not, It’s Original* Abarca offers the idea that authenticity is related to both the cooking method and the individual who is cooking²⁴⁰. They state that the cook has an “inherent authority” in creating an authentic dish, while the method in

²³⁶ Montañó 1997, 57

²³⁷ Counihan and Van Esterik 2012, 398

²³⁸ hooks 1992, 370

²³⁹ Counihan and Van Esterik 2012, 398

²⁴⁰ Abarca 2004, 1

which it is prepared ensures that the dish remains “real, actual, genuine as opposed imagined²⁴¹”. While the method represents ingredients or the recipe, the cook has the ability to operate within or outside of this method. In popular discourse we often see this style of cooking linked to specific family member’s signature dishes, e.g. family recipes like grandma’s cookies or biscuits. Two individuals preparing the same dish may follow the same the recipe and use identical ingredients but create two different tasting dishes. Both the methods of cooking and the chef’s inherent authority work together to build the dish.

However authenticity interferes with the relationship of these two elements. Authenticity removes the emphasis from the individual cook and shifts to the method. Any deviation from this process or method, as Abarca’s states any *chiste*²⁴², renders the dish inauthentic. Essentializing the dish so it be standardized and reproduced. In Abarca’s understanding authenticity removes all potential deviation in the method of preparation from a dish and produces a standardized version of a dish. This removes individuality from authenticity, just as multiculturalism removed individualization from a diverse society, without an individual’s *chiste* the dish is easier to recognize as authentic. I argue, as Abarca does, that this removal of individuality creates an essentialized version of a dish, for culinary outsiders. The removal of the individuality of the food makes it duplicable and understandable to the culinary outsider. Now the culinary outsider is able to define what is authentic and what is no fake. As Abarca concludes, when discussing the term “authentic Mexican food”,

“For me this expression functions as a double-edged sword: On one side it rips away intellectual cultural knowledge belonging to an *ethnic other*... On the other side, it boxes in certain *ethnic others* by essentializing them and keeping them within well-defined cultural, social, and economic boundaries²⁴³”.

Both Montañó and Abarca try to address how the food of the ethnic other has been standardized, one could use the term essentialized here as well, by different forms of the

²⁴¹ Abarca 2004, 2

²⁴² a twist

²⁴³ Abarca 2004, 19

dominant culture. While Montañó focuses on the standardization process through so called integration and Abarca looks at the way authenticators need to standardize dishes in order to identify them as authentic both scholars identify that the food of the other is always controlled and either accepted or rejected by what is valued within and by the dominant culture.

6.7 Authenticity for culinary insiders

Much of what has been discussed within this study so far has dealt with the relationship of culinary outsiders and authenticity, however it is important to briefly discuss what impact the authenticity has on the relationship of gastronomic insiders and their own cuisines. Bruner's second sense of authenticity acknowledges that authenticity can in some forms be determined by insiders and I have also equated the immigrant's desire to for "a taste of home" to be similar to a desire for the authentic. In this section I will introduce the impact of the dominant culture on authenticity for culinary insiders.

"I am an Indian...embarking on a crusade against the term 'Indian food' (no such thing) and the characterization of the cuisine of my country as the junk one finds in Tandoori restaurants all over the world. The correct term for that obnoxious good is 'Punjabi-Moghali' and I want to let the food lovers of the world know that has a lot more to offer²⁴⁴".

Heldke attributed this quote to being from a 1976 interview with Madhur Jaffery and I believe it speaks volumes about the experience of the concept of authentic and the culinary insider. Madhur Jeffery has been regarded globally as one of the most profound food-writers writing about the food of the Indian subcontinent. Within this quote we see her drive to alter the perception of so-called Indian food around the world as it has been constructed to follow the culinary tastes of the dominant culture. As identified above food adventurers view their own culture as culinary neutral and more of a breeding ground for other cultures' cuisine to be consumed and explored. However immigrant restaurateurs in the United States have historically had to adjust their cuisines to the so-called American palate. Li's work on Chinese restaurants in Colorado and Utah concludes that, "All immigrants and their succeeding generations find their traditional foodways altered to some

²⁴⁴ Heldke 2003, 106

degree to adjust their sense of ethnic identity and their relationship to the larger united American society²⁴⁵". Here one can see that this idea of culinary neutrality, serves the dominant culture's understanding of the culinary hegemony. In fact as Li argues immigrant restaurateurs are often forced to alter their foodways and eating practices to survive in the United States. This tailoring of food practices often involved catering to local food demands, ranging from serving "western" dishes or adjusting specific flavors to fit local palates. Changing your food, as a culinary insider, to achieve financial success is often met mixed with reception. Some restaurants are forced to live a "dual life", as argued by Sylvia Ferrero, in which they serve dishes to culinary insiders and another "standardized" version to culinary outsiders²⁴⁶. Immigrant restaurateurs are stuck between profit and cooking what they know.

For the food adventurer this shift to standardization results the eventual dismal of restaurants or dishes that have been deemed too Americanized. Here we see the emergence of Minh-ha's concept of planned authenticity, which speaks to authenticity functioning based on the demands made by the dominant. Minh-ha offers her how she navigates this process, "The difficulties appear perhaps less insurmountable only as I/i succeed in making a distinction between difference reduced to identity-authenticity and difference understood also as critical difference from myself²⁴⁷". The ethnic individual must then devise methods to determine what ideas of authenticity are built to serve authenticators and what differences are related to their own understanding of their culture. Internally a struggle exists from celebrating differences and understanding what differences can be celebrated.

Within this chapter I have tried to dismantle the term authenticity and how it is used when linked with gastronomy. To offer the idea that behind every authenticated dish or cuisine there is an authenticator with different desires, experiences, and understandings. Bruner presents us with four different understandings of authenticity that recognize different perspectives in the authentication procedures. I have also introduced authenticators themselves, for example food adventurers, whose need to navigate various

²⁴⁵ Li 2002, 343

²⁴⁶ Buettner 2008, 881

²⁴⁷ Minh-ha 1989, 85

cuisines provides them with something other than sustenance. The complex nature of authenticity is in stark contrast to the effect of using the term, which is often used to standardize or solidify the taste, preparation, and ingredients of a dish.

7 Reflection

Throughout this study I have tried to express both the complex nature of authenticity and that often when one uses the phrases *authentic restaurant* or *authentic food*, they are following the same steps that multiculturalists do as they “celebrate difference”. The label of authenticity results in an essentialization of a dish, cuisine or restaurant. Abarca’s understanding of authenticity is that use of the term in effect removes the *chiste* of dish²⁴⁸, the agency of the cook or chef. When considering the term authenticity we must understand that it is not singular in notion, it exists and is used from different perspectives. One should consider who is authenticating and for what purpose they are authenticating. What is the relationship of the authenticator to that which they want to authenticate? What factors contribute to the process of determining a restaurant’s authenticity? Much of gastronomic thinking operates within the relationship of us and them. Whether we are talking about the location of Restaurant A and the way users on ReviewSite perceive the effect of the “*strip mall*” or “*hole-in-a-wall*” locale on their experience at Restaurant A or how one determines what is and is not ethnic food.

In the beginning of this project I hoped to discover what modes determine a restaurant’s authenticity and whether restaurants can develop their authenticity through “non-taste related mode”. Using Bruner’s understanding of authenticity we can determine that different modes indicate authenticity to different visitors at every individual restaurant. What we should be cogitating on, is what does the diner bring to the equation and what does the weaver, restaurant, expect the diner to bring. Looking at the modes selected from Restaurant A, one can determine that there are modes that can transfer their own authenticity to the restaurant itself based on the fact that there are original elements, however most the interior of Restaurant A is comprised of elements that do not offer an aura of authenticity.

²⁴⁸ Abarca 2004, 12

7.1 Modal categories of Restaurant A

I argue that the modes of Restaurant A can be classified into three different categories based on their origin and the effect that they have on the customer. Let's first consider *the images, elements and sounds related to Burma*, all of these modes present the diner with aura of authenticity. As Bruner alludes to in his third sense of authenticity, historical reproductions often incorporate original elements to give the space a kind of transferred authenticity. The sandalwood statues, tapestries, children's school bags along with the Saung music aid in creating authentic environment of their diners. They aid in transporting diners and transfer their authenticity to less authentic aspects of Restaurant A. In User 1's response to Restaurant A, "*the young women who waited on me was lovely, even switching the music. I wanted to hear Burmese music somehow, it seemed so much more fitting with my meal and the beautiful surroundings*". We see the effect that these kinds of elements can have on a diner and aid in transporting them to a new place, a stated goal of the Manager. Similar to diners at Veeraswamy's looking to be transported back to the British Raj. Original elements aid those looking to engage with a gastronomic culture as a form of *culinary tourism*, allowing diners to escape their, "traditional cultural landscape and explore unknown sensory²⁴⁹". As User 17 notes the décor matches the food or the expectations that User 17 has of what a restaurant serving Burmese food should appear as. While most ReviewSite users are not preoccupied with the label of authenticity many of them express transportative nature of Restaurant A.

Within the category of *general difference* I am not trying to assert that these various modes offer any kind of transferred authenticity but more to say that for culinary outsiders they create the aura of otherness or difference. This aspect of the décor and atmospheric choices within the restaurant do not revolve around items sourced from Myanmar or help the restaurant look or feel like a restaurant in Myanmar. As the Manager stated, "*A lot of this stuff just came from our home and is used when need light [in the case of a specific lamp] or pops of color [in the case of the lanterns and the golden Zen frog]*". If we here consider Said's conception of the Occident constructing the idea of the Orient, one can see *general difference* contains various elements from this constructed idea of the Orient. The

²⁴⁹ Ellis 2009, 55

elements that make up this mode contribute to the otherness of the Restaurant A, within this classification I have included Elephant Statues, Buddhist imagery, red lanterns, pillow cases with Chinese text and a statue which the Manager described as having, “*no real meaning just looked Zen*”. It is hard to ignore that connection to Choi’s analysis of Ilhan Choy, a Korean entrepreneur who tapped into early twentieth century American desires for “Chinese-ness”. Restaurateurs and gastronomic entrepreneurs are aware of the orientalist expectations of American diners, as Choi summarizes this by stating “American culture embraced the ‘invented’ Orient of chow mein and chop suey²⁵⁰”. Russek alludes to the concept of picturesque foreignness that was developed by Chinese restaurateurs who were aware that their customers came to dine in search of sustenance and exoticism²⁵¹. The Users’ response to the interior of Restaurant A being peaceful or serene conjure up Orientalist ideas of Asia being, “exotic, romantic and subservient²⁵²”. A place where they can enjoy “an Oriental dream²⁵³”.

The final classification, *Familiarity via difference*, is where we can find some of Restaurant A’s choices to make adjustments to local tastes and the local gastronomic environment. As different groups and different cuisines have been absorbed into the category of Mainstream American or have become subject to Anglo-conformity²⁵⁴ their dishes or elements of their cuisine have entered the American culinary lexicon. As the Manager of Restaurant A described the use of these names of the menu, are meant to offer aspects of familiarity to the diner, familiarity with otherness. In this category we see Restaurant A attempting explain the otherness of Burmese cuisine, something that they are aware most diners are unfamiliar with, via gastronomic terms that may not have become Mainstream American but are more familiar to their diners. As van den Berghe states ethnic cuisines “get recreated, transformed, and reinterpreted²⁵⁵” in the urban context. That is to

²⁵⁰ Choi 2016, 532

²⁵¹ Russek 2011, 40

²⁵² Acharya 2010, 1010

²⁵³ Buettner 2008, 873

²⁵⁴ Hirschman 1983, 398

²⁵⁵ van den Berghe 1994, 393

say I am not approaching these elements from Bruner's third understanding of authenticity being impossible, Restaurant A as other immigrant restaurateurs, as both Buettner and Li discuss, historically have must adapt to their local environment.

It is important to add that while I included the elephant statues in the category of *general difference*, I think based on the responses from the Cook and the Manager one could also classify this mode as way Restaurant A is able to channel difference via a cuisine, in this case Thai gastronomy or imagery, that their diners are more familiar with. While Thai food would still not be considered Mainstream American cuisine, based on the responses of the two members of staff it is clear that Thai cuisine is more recognizable and understood for the customers of Restaurant A. We can consider the shifting notion of Mainstream American in a culinary discourse expanding faster than in a popular or political discourse.

7.2 Self-orientalizing and the diner's expectations

By using MDA, multimodal discourse analysis, we see the restaurant as the weaver of the various modes, visual, audible and written, used within Restaurant A. MDA makes every mode displayed context dependent, meaning they are selected by the weaver to display specific meaning to the diner. In the chapter *Orientalism*, I offer the idea that immigrant entrepreneurs and immigrant restaurateurs often "self-Orientalize" in order to gain financial success in new environments. That is to say these individuals are aware of what expectations their diners have and what orientalized understanding of their cuisine and culture their customers possess. In case of Restaurant A I found that they are aware that most of their customers whether they are a member of the general dining public, a foodie, or a food adventurer bring little expectations to a restaurant connected to Burmese cuisine or culture. As stated, Users on Restaurant A's ReviewSite page often compare the restaurant to other "Asian" restaurants. While Acharya offers that, "ASIA IS NOT "one" and there is no singular idea of Asia²⁵⁶", in an orientalized understanding of the Orient, Asia can be seen as grouping that ignores the size and difference on the continent.

²⁵⁶ Acharya 2010, 1001

In discussing the statues of Burmese women, the Manager states that most customers are unaware of what people from Myanmar look like as she states, *“I don’t think the people here really know about Burmese culture. To have any stereotypes yet. Cause the Burmese people they meet they just categorize them as Asian or Chinese”*. Additionally a majority of Restaurant A’s employees are not from Myanmar or do not have a connection to the country. While Hirose and Pih argue a restaurant’s authenticity is often based on “production of racial signification of the ‘Oriental other’²⁵⁷”, in the case of Restaurant A, a majority of diners are not measuring Restaurant A’s authenticity based on the origin of their employees. As The Manager states that most of their employees identify as either *“Filipino-American or American”* and visitors to Restaurant A are often unaware of the employees’ origins. We find this in User 7’s post on ReviewSite in which they compare Restaurant A to *“people they met in Burma”*. The Manager during our interview offered,

“We’ve have multiple people ask my employees whether they were Burmese. When they clearly were not...well these people don’t know what Burmese people look like, so they don’t know what they look so they are going to ask. Even asking a half white half Filipino girl or a Portuguese girl if they are Burmese. [How does that effect your employees and yourself?] When I’m not in the right mindset it does bother me because why is it only a Burmese person that should open a Burmese restaurant. But it does change the experience. Let’s just say we went to an Italian homemade restaurant [a reference to a nearby restaurant], if you have been there the servers there are very Italian, they have their Italian accents it just makes it, I don’t know a little more homey. A little more authentic even though the people in the back cooking are not Italian. So It just depends what kind of experience you are creating”.

The Manager’s statement here details that they themselves are aware of the dining expectations that Hirose and Pih discuss based on their assertion that, *“It just depends what kind of experience you are creating”*. The weaver is more than aware of what type of mode their customers are looking for and the context that restaurant they run exists in.

While not all Users of ReviewSite use Asian Food or Cuisine as a way to describe Restaurant A, it is one way to designate who is food adventurer and who is a member of the general dining public. Food adventurers would use ReviewSite as an opportunity to display both their knowledge and their capital. Perhaps it was a misstep in this study to observe Users from ReviewSite and expect them to be food adventurers. Considering

²⁵⁷ Hirose and Pih 2011, 1499

Heldke's definition and description may be posting online about restaurants violates one of the core principles of being a food adventurer and that their "obsessive interest in and appetite for the new, the obscure and the exotic²⁵⁸" is kept private in an effort to protect their own cultural capital.

When considering the interior elements selected and displayed by Restaurant A, I believe have I found evidence of a restaurant that tries to present a balance between authenticity, otherness and familiarity. A portion of the modes displayed give Restaurant A the aura of authenticity and transfer their authenticity to the restaurant itself, while a majority of the modes in the restaurant do not offer any transferred authenticity. If we consider the opposing understandings of the lighting of the restaurant, from the Cook's perspective, Restaurant A is not considered the way "it ought to be²⁵⁹". But we must also recognize that Restaurant A is a business, that relies on maintaining customers to survive as both Narayan, Ray and Turgeon and Pastinelli detail in their work on ethnic restaurants and ethnic restaurateurs. What we find in Restaurant A is that they are more concerned with creating credible²⁶⁰ dining experience. As the Manager states, "*It just depends what kind of experience you are creating*".

7.3 Alternatives for Authenticity

With this glimpse into the world of authenticity I hope to present the complexity of the term as well as begin to disassemble the solidity of authenticity. By breaking down the term authenticity and understanding how it functions based on who is authenticating. Eventually we can step away from the term entirely or if not introduce alternatives. We need to contemplate both who is authenticating this food and for what purpose. One could argue, as the ethnomusicologist Peter Kivy does, that "no case of authenticity is impossible²⁶¹". Although Kivy's ideas of the impossible nature of authenticity is related to

²⁵⁸ Heldke 2003, 2

²⁵⁹ Buettner 2008, 883

²⁶⁰ Bruner 1994, 399

²⁶¹ Heldke 2003, 24

musical performance and an inability to reproduce the same authentic performance, Heldke links this understanding with authentic food. Just as one cannot fully experience hearing Gustav Mahler's *Fifth Symphony* in the early twentieth century, culinary outsiders cannot eat in the same way as culinary insiders. What Kivy does argue for is "personal authenticity", an individualized version of a genuine or real experience²⁶². If we apply Kivy's concept of individualized authenticity to food, one can see that personal authenticity is different than authentic food. The use of personal authenticity allows a diner to incorporate their personal experience into their own understanding of the dish they are consuming or creating. As established earlier the label of authentic is often meant as means for an outside group to identify something foreign. As Abarca argues authenticity is often connected to a standardization of dish and require the removal of the uniqueness and individuality of the dish. Food labeled as authentic by food adventurers no longer possess uniqueness, in affect losing its own personal authenticity. Personal authenticity allows us to individualize the term authenticity and connect it to our own taste experience and development. Personal authenticity introduces a more liquid approach to understanding gastronomy. Dervin in discussing interculturality offers that, "A liquid approach to interculturality is based on the idea that 'knowledge, society and subjectivity are all dynamic and contextual phenomena which can be theorized in terms of dialogue between different (real and imagined) perspectives'²⁶³". It allows us to account for an individual's particular culinary experience and can be an alternative to singular understandings of authenticity.

But what alternative can be offered for the idea of what something "ought to be"²⁶⁴? In concluding their analysis of an instructional cooking program featuring celebrity-chef Martha Stewart preparing "authentic tamales", Abarca, via Haltrup, offers the idea that instead of using the term authentic food we can use *original food*²⁶⁵. Abarca argues, "The change from authentic to original functions as a constant reminder that culture is always

²⁶² Heldke 2003, 24

²⁶³ Dervin 2011, 38

²⁶⁴ Buettner 2008, 883

²⁶⁵ Abarca 2004, 20

changing, because as active agents we are always defining new cultural practices²⁶⁶”. This shift to original from authentic allows the individual who is cooking to have the authority over different aspects of the dish, preparation, ingredients, etc., as well as not subjecting them to “a hierarchy paradigm that measures their value²⁶⁷”. A part of Abarca’s reasoning for the shift to original from authentic deals with ownership over dishes or cuisines and a way to negate culinary outsiders from determining the authenticity of a specific gastronomic culture’s dishes. Either personal authenticity or original food allow culinary insiders and outsiders to define food through their own experiences, something that is already occurring but rarely been acknowledged.

7.4 Conclusion

This study has offered an opportunity for both self-reflection and greater understanding of my own culinary experience. As gastronomic outsiders or even as food adventurers we crave new tastes, that we may or may not have connections to. New flavors and textures dance across our palate leading us to believe we can understand entire cultures in one bite, but it is important to strike a balance between isolating difference in taste and authenticating. Often our “understanding” is rooted in our own orientalist expectations of a cuisine and the “genuine differences” highlighted by multiculturalist discourse. I hope this study allows the reader to reconsider why they make certain dining choices and what are their expectations from these choices.

If I were to alter the study in any way, I would have preferred to interview the customers dining at Restaurant A to get their direct feedback on various interior elements of Restaurant A. The reviews from ReviewSite featured in the study serve as a stand-in for the diner’s perspective but if possible, in the future it would be preferable to interview customers at any selected restaurant. In the early stages of this project, I found that most dining establishments feared having anyone other than their employees interact with customers, both in terms of providing surveys or with semi-structured interview.

²⁶⁶ Abarca 2004, 20

²⁶⁷ Abarca 2004, 20

Additionally if this thesis were to be expanded, it would be desirable to develop and grow the study to feature either multiple cities or neighboring cities that make up a metropolitan area or region. This would allow us to further explore the notion of Mainstream American and the relationship of this concept to the local gastronomic cultures observed. In order to understand how this identification differs in different regions or neighboring cities.

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